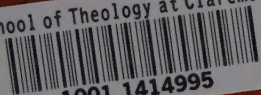


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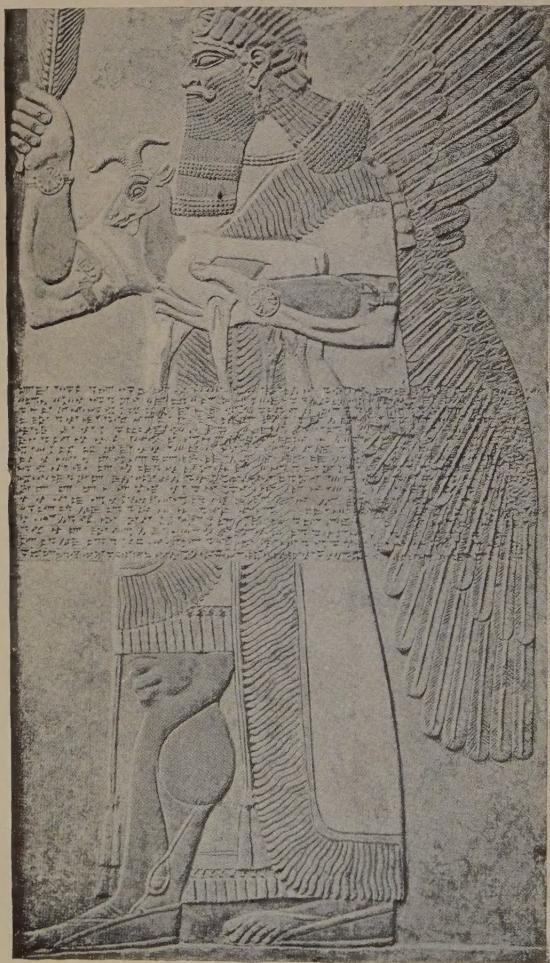


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BABYLON, ASSYRIA AND ISRAEL



MYTHOLOGICAL BEING FROM SCULPTURES
IN AN ASSYRIAN PALACE

BABYLON, ASSYRIA AND ISRAEL

THEIR HISTORY AS RECORDED IN THE BIBLE
AND THE CUNEIFORM INSCRIPTIONS

BY

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PREFACE

THE contact between Israel and the peoples of the Euphratean Valley was so frequent and important that a knowledge of their inter-relationships is essential to a proper understanding of the history recorded in the Scriptures. No further reason need be given for the issue of such a work as this. The idea of the book has been in mind for many years, but various reasons have caused the task of compilation to be put on one side after time. It has, however, at last taken shape, and it is hoped that the information it contains will prove useful to a wide circle. The information brought together has been culled from many sources, and thanks are due to many who have in various ways assisted in the work that has been entailed.

When the work was originally contemplated, it was intended that it should be issued in

Preface

the form of a guide to the Babylonian and Assyrian exhibits in the British Museum. As the work progressed, it was felt that this would be less useful than the form in which the information is presented herein. In an appendix, however, there will be found a useful guide which will enable any reader to connect the exhibits referred to with the facts concerning the various kings and others with whom they are associated.

W. H. B.

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BABYLON, ASSYRIA and ISRAEL

CHAPTER I

THE LAND OF ASSYRIA AND BABYLONIA

THE land of Assyria and Babylonia, with which we are principally concerned, is the territory watered by the Tigris and the Euphrates, and answers fairly closely to the district now known as Mesopotamia.¹ It was the seat of one of the earliest developments of the kingdoms of men. It is recorded that shortly after the flood—

“Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore

¹ See map, page 22.

Babylon, Assyria and Israel

it is said, Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the Lord. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. Out of that land he went forth into Assyria, and builded Nineveh, and Rehoboth-Ir, and Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah (the same is the great city)." [Gen. x. 8-12 (R.V.).]

The language implies considerable political organisation, and much remains to this day to testify that such was the case, as we shall see.

In this area the earliest scenes of human history were transacted, for the Garden of Eden is associated with the Tigris (Hiddekel) and Euphrates. Here, too, after the ark, "wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water," rested upon Mount Ararat, to the north of Mesopotamia, the descendants of Noah "found a plain in the land of Shinar," and endeavoured to make such arrangements as would ensure the continuance of their political institutions. Such a scheme was a challenge to God, who had sent the flood because of man's iniquity.

The Land of Assyria and Babylonia

“ So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth : and they left off to build the city. Therefore was the name of it called Babel ; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth : and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.”
(Gen. xi. 8 and 9.)

In the language of Shinar, Babel is “ Bab-ilu ” and means the “ gate of God.” This was man’s name for the place. In the language of the Scriptures it means confusion. The difference is an interesting illustration of the contrast between human and Divine points of view. Later ages saw remarkable developments in the country ; mighty empires arose, and the names of Assyria and Babylon attest the prowess of the peoples who lived in the territory of the two rivers. The land was well suited to be the theatre upon which should arise the early phases of the kingdoms of men. Its present condition of desolation is very different from its early state ; yet even now it is recognised that given proper irrigation the soil is so fertile that Mesopotamia might become

Babylon, Assyria and Israel

one of the granaries of the world. Its soil, really a rich alluvium brought down by the rivers from the upper country, was almost as fertile as that of Egypt. The land, thus irrigated by the two rivers and other streams, brought forth abundantly. The date-palm also flourished in the district; wheat and barley are considered to be indigenous to the plains of the Euphrates, where, according to Herodotus, cereals yielded two-hundredfold or even more.

The great difference between the possible and the actual is arresting. Why should a land capable of such abundant produce remain desolate for so long? The answer is to be found in the Scriptures of truth wherein we read :

“And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans' pride, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation : neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there : neither shall shepherds make their flocks to lie down there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full

The Land of Assyria and Babylonia

of doleful creatures; and ostriches shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And wolves shall cry in their castles, and jackals in the pleasant palaces." [Isa. xiii. 19-22 (R.V.).]

"Because of the wrath of the Lord it shall not be inhabited, but it shall be wholly desolate: every one that goeth by Babylon shall be astonished." (Jer. l. 13.)

In harmony with these and other predictions, the land has remained desolate. Assyria and Babylon became memories, their historical records had apparently perished. Traditions remained, handed down by various writers, a strange medley of truth and error so confused that little could be made of them, and many were ready to discredit both the traditions and the Scriptural allusions to the greatness of the kingdoms which had existed there. Such doubting was quite natural; that it has been dispelled is one of the greatest triumphs of the archæologist, and, what is far more important, an illustration of the overruling providence of God. Had the tablets and bas-reliefs been found in the days when priestcraft and super-

Babylon, Assyria and Israel

stition reigned supreme, they would in all probability have been denounced as magical incantations, and the monks and priests would have destroyed them. Had the Mohammedans found them in the days of their supremacy in the land, they would unquestionably have destroyed them, looking upon them as a part of image-worship. In fact, a sculpture discovered in the time of the explorations by Rich¹ was shattered by these people for that very reason. During all these centuries they remained safely underground until the scepticism and criticism of the nineteenth century gave a value to the discovery which would have been quite lacking at any previous period. Their discovery and decipherment have been serious blows to the sceptic and the higher critic, for they strike at the very root of many of the objections they raise to the Bible records.

It is something more than a coincidence that, at the very time when these discoveries began to be made on any important scale, religious discussion was coming into prominence and the

¹ See page 11.

The Land of Assyria and Babylonia

first principles of the Oracles of God, which had been as effectually buried under clerical tradition as the Assyrian and Babylonian monuments and tablets were hid under the ruins of the country, were becoming more and more clearly discerned. The re-emergence of a knowledge of the Truth and the proofs of the accuracy of the Book upon which that knowledge depended were thus proceeding side by side. Could there be a clearer indication of Divine overruling than is evidenced by these co-related facts ?

Apart from the mountain-ranges of Assyria, the general appearance of the districts in question is that of a great plain broken only by a number of mounds rising abruptly from the ground in various places. They vary in size and shape, some being long and low, others lofty and conical, but all are of the same character, being composed of soft earth mixed with fragments of pottery and bricks which often bear cuneiform writing. This appearance of mounds on a vast plain is strikingly in accord with the predictions of Jeremiah.

Babylon, Assyria and Israel

"She shall be the hindermost of the nations, a wilderness, a dry land, and a desert." (Jer. l. 12.)

"And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling-place for jackals, an astonishment, and an hissing, without inhabitant." (Jer. li. 37.)

These mounds are the remains of palaces and temples of old times. They were built on hills if such existed in the desired situation, if not, platforms were made, 30 to 60 feet in height. The platforms were composed of earth with a facing of solid bricks. Sometimes several platforms were erected on top of each other, forming a sort of pyramid. The palace or temple was built on the platform which had been prepared, and was usually composed of bricks made of clay mixed with straw and dried in the sun. The outer bricks of the building, however, were probably baked in kilns, the best clay being selected, thereby rendering them stronger and more suited to stand the ravages of time. On these outer walls were stamped the names of the kings by whom the respective palaces were

The Land of Assyria and Babylonia

built. So firm and substantial were the bricks forming these outer walls that they have been used in the erection of dwellings in later times.

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORY OF THE EXCAVATIONS

BEFORE we briefly review the history of the excavations it will be interesting to consider the way in which the work of excavation was carried on. The first thing to be done was to conjecture the height of the hill or platform on which the building had been erected (generally about 30 feet). Trenches were conducted at this level until a wall was reached which was then followed until a break occurred, indicating that a doorway existed there. The workmen would then dig through the thickness of the wall and thus continue all round it. Throughout the operations shafts would be sunk, the sides of corridors and trenches propped up and the earth cleared away in baskets. All this work required patience and skill. The rubbish which remained often contained valuable relics, such as dishes of bronze and glass, articles of ivory,

History of the Excavations

mother-of-pearl and metal, and remains of armour and weapons.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, Mr. Rich, Resident of the East India Company at Baghdad, obtained a few relics of pottery and fragments of inscriptions from some of the mounds on the Euphrates. They were, however, very few, and according to Sir Henry Layard, "a case three feet square enclosed all that remained not only of the great city Nineveh, but of Babylon itself."

The next explorer was M. Botta, the French Consul at Mosul, who explored the mound of Koujunjik, the site of Nineveh, with some success. On the advice of a native he transferred his operations to Khorsabad, where he was delighted to find the remains of the palace of an Assyrian king. In 1845, with the aid of funds granted by the French Government, the palace of Sargon was unearthed.

About the same time as M. Botta was carrying on his researches the great English explorer, Layard, investigated the mound at Nimrud, the site of Calah, which, according to the standard inscription of Ashur-bani-pal (885 B.C.) was

Babylon, Assyria and Israel

founded by Shalmaneser I. At this spot the remains of the palaces of Ashur-nasir-pal, Shalmaneser II, and Esarhaddon were found ; also the black obelisk of Shalmaneser and other interesting articles.

In 1849 Sir Henry Layard returned to Mosul for a systematic exploration of the mound of Koujunjik. Here he found the libraries of clay books which have been so useful in determining the history of the region. Excavations also took place at Kalat Sherkat, Nebi Yunus, and Arban. Kalat Sherkat is the site of Ashur, the metropolis of the first kingdom of Assyria. Here various objects were found bearing the names of early Assyrian kings and the inscriptions on eight-sided cylinders of the reign of Tiglath Pileser I.

Five years afterwards Sir Henry Rawlinson explored the Birs Nimrud mound (the supposed site of the tower of Babel), where was situated the ancient city of Borsippa. Here are the remains of the famous tower of the Seven Planets, built by Nebuchadnezzar II. He also carried out excavations in the buried ruins of Nebuchadnezzar's palace at Babylon. At the

History of the Excavations

same time Mr. Loftus was conducting operations at Nippur, Erech, Larsa, and Mukeyyer (Ur of the Chaldees).

In 1873 Mr. George Smith went to Nineveh to obtain further fragments and tablets. He had been engaged in piecing together the portions of those already in the British Museum, and, finding many missing, he made three successive journeys for the purpose of finding them and bringing home more material. His object was attained, and we are able, through his labours, to reconstruct the Babylonian records of the Creation and the Deluge. He died of the plague on his third journey, in 1876.

Between the years 1878 and 1883 Mr. Hormuzd Rassam, acting on behalf of the Trustees of the British Museum, carried out excavations at many places in Babylonia and Assyria.

Later explorers have been Dr. E. Budge, Mr. L. W. King, and Mr. R. Thompson, also an American expedition which discovered a monument of Sargon of Accad, one of the earliest kings of whom any record exists.

The result of the work referred to is that collections exist in various places of vast

Babylon, Assyria and Israel

quantities of monuments, bas-reliefs, and tablets, most of which bear inscriptions. As an illustration of the extent of these discoveries, it may be mentioned that from one place alone there are in the British Museum over twenty thousand tablets and fragments. How much light these may throw on the history and civilisation of the peoples of the land may be imagined.

Since the foregoing was originally written further work has been carried on by a Joint Expedition of the British Museum and the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania. At Ur many interesting relics have been disinterred relating to the early times of the peoples of that area, before the period of Khammurabi. The remains of a Ziggurat, or temple, have been discovered, the walls of which are, even now, well preserved. The results of the work are of great importance, but they do not necessitate any revision of the following pages, although certain matters might have been introduced had the information been available earlier.

CHAPTER III

CUNEIFORM WRITING AND ITS DECIPHERMENT

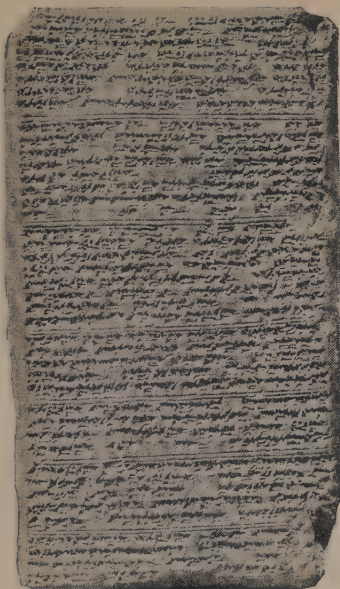
THE comparatively large amount of information that we have concerning Babylon and Assyria is due to the abundance of literature and inscriptions which the spade of the excavator has revealed. This fact is due to the high state of civilisation and the culture of the inhabitants, and to the durable nature of the materials upon which they wrote.

The system of writing in use was that known as cuneiform, or wedge-shaped writing, so called from the method in which it was performed. It was derived from the Sumerians, the early inhabitants of the land, and consisted of imprints made with a stylus, an instrument of wood, bone, or metal, with a wedge-shaped end, upon moist clay which was afterwards dried or baked. Originally the characters were as nearly as possible pictures of the word or

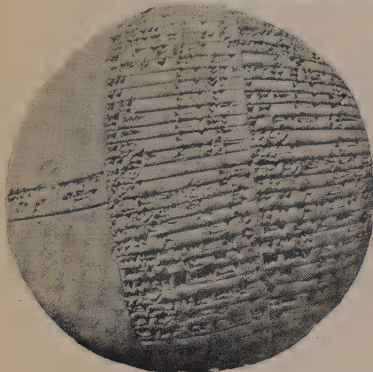
Babylon, Assyria and Israel

idea to be expressed, made up of marks in various combinations, chipped in stone. Babylonia occupied an alluvial tract of land, forming the basin of the lower Tigris and Euphrates, rivers subject to flood. The alluvium brought down by these rivers was found to be an excellent writing-material, more convenient and more easily impressed than stone. Upon this medium picture characters were difficult to impress, and simplified forms were invented in which the superfluous parts were discarded, and the picture writing became more conventional, consisting only of wedges in simple combination. The tablets of clay thus impressed by the stylus were baked or dried in the sun, and the record thus became permanent. To prevent breakage small holes were sometimes made in the tablet to allow of evaporation. As a rule the tablets were rectangular in form, and varied considerably in size and thickness. For special purposes other shapes were used, and for the large historical texts cylinders were adopted.

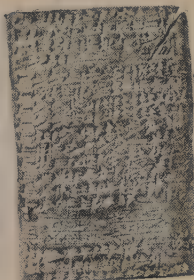
Each character in the cuneiform writing represented not a letter, but a syllable, of which there were about four hundred, and these in



1



2



3

EXAMPLES OF CUNEIFORM-WRITTEN TABLETS

1. A Tel-el-Amarna Tablet.
2. List of fields with measurements and statistics.
3. Deed recording sale of land.

Cuneiform Writing

various combinations formed words. The characters themselves in many instances represented words also, a fact which caused much difficulty in decipherment, especially as one syllable was sometimes depicted in more than one way. This fact led to the compilation of syllabaries, or lists of signs. These syllabaries were of various kinds ; some had three columns—the cuneiform sign, its Sumerian value, and its Assyrian name—whilst others had four, the Assyrian meaning being added also. They may be likened to modern two-language dictionaries.¹

The cuneiform writings and inscriptions being thus complicated, they were for many years an unintelligible puzzle to the archæological student. The key to them was first obtained when, in 1802, certain inscriptions in Persian cuneiform characters cut in the rock at Behistun were examined. These were written in the Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian languages, and, working from the Persian, a clue to the Babylonian was obtained. In 1837 Sir Henry Rawlinson selected two small inscriptions as

¹ See pages 35-37.

Cuneiform Writing

From a careful study of a copy of the Behistun inscriptions, his previous deductions and knowledge of ancient languages, Rawlinson drew up a grammar which enabled him to read the Persian inscription, from which the Babylonian was deduced. This gave the key to the store-houses of information which previously had been closed to modern peoples.

The art of decipherment having been learned, the tablets and cylinders became intelligible. They were found to contain history, geography, religion, astronomy, morality, natural history, navigation, domestic economy, etc. They had sometimes been gathered together to form libraries, the best known being the Royal Library at Nineveh, accumulated by Sargon, Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, and Ashur-bani-pal. Almost every branch of knowledge found a place in this library, many of the volumes being in the Sumerian language, in interpretation of which translations were made and vocabularies provided. On the site of this ancient library twenty thousand tablets have been unearthed. Their shape varies with their subject-matter, and they appear to have been arranged on

Babylon, Assyria and Israel

shelves in classes, and are in many cases labelled.

In addition to "books," there are in existence letters and despatches of various kinds. These are usually fairly flat, and having to be carried from place to place were often protected by envelopes, also made of clay, and sometimes bearing the name of the person for whom they were intended. They relate to the repair and cleansing of canals, transport, providing crews for barges, supply of wood, preservation of fishing rights, shearing of sheep, restoration of officials to their posts, arrests, legal cases, collection of revenue, audit of accounts, etc.

An interesting set of letters was found at Tel-el-Amarna, in Egypt. Although found in Egypt and relating to Egyptian affairs, they were written in the cuneiform characters on clay which varies according to the locality whence the tablets were sent. One of these is sealed on the under-side with a Babylonian seal, as was the custom in that country and also in Assyria. Documents were sealed by means of what are known as cylinder seals. They were made of many different materials,

Cuneiform Writing

such as marble, emerald, amethyst, agate, etc., and on them a design was engraved. The seals were cylindrical in shape, with a hole through the centre enabling the owner to pass a string through it for security. This seal was rolled on the moist clay, and left an impression which became permanent when the tablet was baked. Impressions were sometimes made by a flat seal on the tablet, or in early times on a clay cone which was fastened to the tablet by a piece of reed. A most interesting series of these seals may be seen in the Assyrian collections in the British Museum.

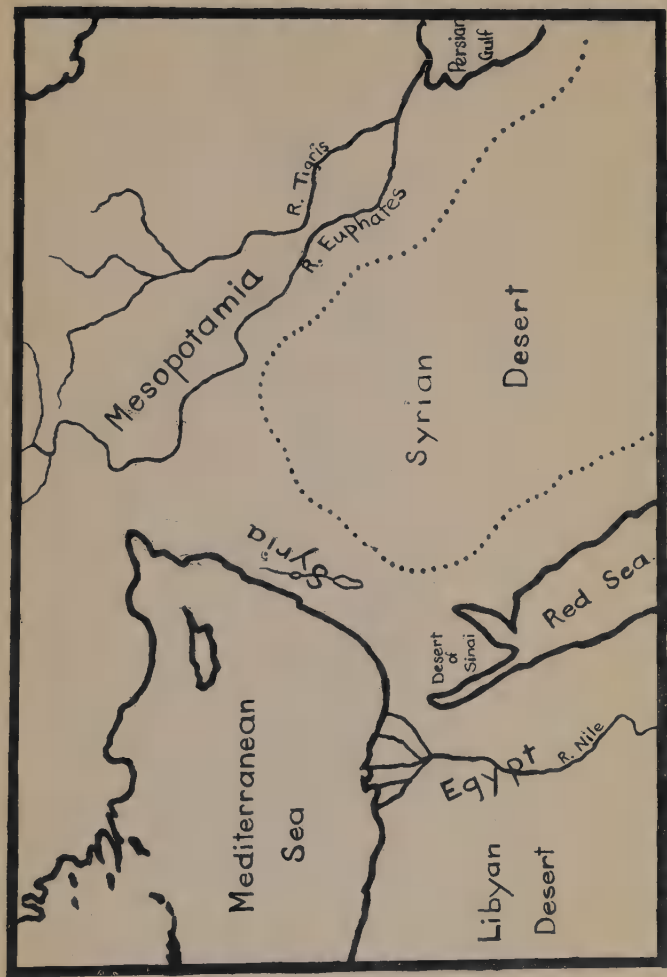
For the preservation of chronicles and histories of various Assyrian kings, clay cylinders were used inscribed in cuneiform characters. They are six-, eight-, or ten-sided, often of large size. Those of the Babylonian kings are usually barrel-shaped. The cylinders were usually discovered in the foundations of palaces, and are of great interest and importance, as they give the Assyrian and Babylonian accounts of many events which are also related in the Bible.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONTACT OF ASSYRIA AND BABYLON WITH ISRAEL

THE peculiar interest which the Assyrian and Babylonian sections of the British Museum possess for the Bible student lies in the fact that there are so many points of contact between the peoples of the Tigris-Euphrates valleys and "the people of the Book." This contact is not confined to any particular period; it is spread through almost the whole of the Old Testament times. It was from Ur of the Chaldees that Abraham came; it was to Assyria, Babylon, and the neighbouring countries that Israel and Judah were carried captive, and from the same lands the restoration recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah took place.

The situation of Israel in the land of Palestine made this contact inevitable. Placed between two rival civilisations, those of Mesopotamia and Egypt, Israel was bound to be affected as



MAP ILLUSTRATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EGYPT, SYRIA, AND MESOPOTAMIA

Note position of the Syrian Desert.

Contact with Israel

the struggles of the various nations for ascendancy took place. They were on the highway which connected, or rather separated, these two peoples. The Syrian Desert formed a practically insuperable barrier to the progress of armies by what would otherwise have been the direct route from Egypt to the Mesopotamian lands.¹ The result of this fact was that Israel was naturally drawn towards one or the other of these peoples. Had they remained as they were intended to do, neutral, and trusted to Jehovah for their support and preservation, their history would have been very different from what it is, and the points of contact would have been few.

We may appreciate how frequent this contact was if we enumerate the names of the various Assyrian and Babylonian kings who are mentioned in the Scriptures. They are—Khammurabi (Amraphel), Tiglath - Pileser, Shalmaneser, Sargon, Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, Merodach Baladan, Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-Merodak, Belshazzar, and Cyrus. Some of these are amongst the best-known names in

¹ See map, opposite.

Babylon, Assyria and Israel

the Bible, a clear indication of the position occupied by them and their people in the Divine record. In addition to those who are actually mentioned by name, there are others who are associated with various portions of the Bible, to whom reference will be made in the following pages. It is not deemed necessary to set out the connection between the peoples in detail here, but rather leave it to be filled in gradually as we proceed in the endeavour to link Assyrian and Babylonian affairs with the Scriptural account of Israel's dealings with them.

In addition to such historical references as are alluded to above, it should be borne in mind that the Scriptures give very definite indications of the character of the peoples and the condition of civilisation to which they had attained. Thus, the Chaldeans are described as "that bitter and hasty nation," "terrible and dreadful." The pride and cruelty of the Assyrians are likewise indicated, their vaunting boastfulness, their lust of dominion. Side by side with these undesirable characteristics we may perceive that they were a people of considerable attainments,

Contact with Israel

amongst whom the various indications of a high state of development were manifested. Any one looking at the sculptures in the various rooms in the British Museum occupied by the Assyrian and Babylonian antiquities will find much to illustrate these various characteristics of the two nations. As the several kings and the history of their times are passed in review, there will be plenty of illustrations indicating these phases of the Assyrian and Babylonian characters.

CHAPTER V

THE CIVILISATION OF THE PEOPLES OF MESOPOTAMIA

THE civilisation that existed in the Mesopotamian valleys was of a very high order, and will be found manifested in very many ways, some of which remind us most forcibly of quite modern customs which it is often assumed are of late origin. In discussing this matter, it will be well for us to realise in what ways the civilisation of a people, if it exist at all, is likely to be found. Without suggesting that they are a complete list, the following things may be mentioned as being clear and definite testimony on the point: (1) Systematic cultivation of the land; (2) trade, commerce, and a recognised exchange; (3) organisation (political and social); (4) legal forms and enactments; (5) scientific knowledge and pursuits; and (6) education. The existence of all these will be apparent from a most cursory examination

Civilisation of Peoples of Mesopotamia

of the Assyrian and Babylonian tablets and inscriptions which have been discovered and translated.

1. Agriculture implies a settled mode of life, a recognised dwelling-place around which the ground may be cultivated, and where the husbandman may in peace and confidence wait "for the precious fruits of the earth," produced in response to his activities. The farmer's homestead has been described as the beginning of the State. Agriculture in Babylonia was a properly-organised business. It will not be necessary to dwell upon this aspect, as other matters to be referred to will indicate that not only was agriculture a regular pursuit of the people, but that proper records were kept of the land so that its produce might be known. Lists of plants and animals were prepared. Examples of all these may be seen in the British Museum.

Closely associated with this aspect of the evidences of civilisation is the matter of irrigation. Water must be made available for the use of the agriculturalist, and this was done in Babylonia from very early times. Canals

Babylon, Assyria and Israel

were dug from the Tigris to the Euphrates, thus permitting the fertilising water to be used where required by the cultivator.

2. Trade, commerce, and exchange, as contrasted with the barter of primitive peoples, were very highly developed in the Babylonian and Assyrian lands. As early as the time of Khammurabi—that is, contemporary with Abraham—orders were issued by the king dealing with such matters as the transport of oil, wearing-apparel, corn, dates, sesame-seed, and other products. Exchange of commodities was duly recorded on tablets, also sales of various things. Weights and measures were fixed. But perhaps the best way to convey an appreciation of the high development of Babylonian arrangements in connection with these matters is to set out a few facts concerning what may, without exaggeration, be called the Babylonian House of Rothschild. It is true they relate to a later date in Babylonian history, but even then they are remarkable as showing how some of the apparently most modern business methods were in full use in Babylonia thousands of years ago.

Civilisation of Peoples of Mesopotamia

In the year 1874 some three thousand tablets were discovered in a number of well-preserved terra-cotta jars, and were purchased by Mr. George Smith for the Museum. They vary in size from one square inch to twelve. They record all sorts of pecuniary and commercial transactions, and they all bear, either as principals or witnesses, the name of Egibi. They are carefully dated, and it has been found possible from them to construct a genealogical table of the firm, showing how the business was handed down from father to son. The House of Egibi seems to have originated in the time of Sennacherib, and it continued to the time of Alexander the Great, as some are dated in the reign of king Alik-sa-an-dir, thus covering a period of four centuries. It has been suggested that the name Egibi is really the equivalent of the Hebrew Yakub (Jacob), and it has been inferred from this that, as in the case of the modern Rothschilds, the banking and commercial arrangements in Babylon were in the hands of a Jewish family. From these tablets it may be gathered that the House of Egibi transacted money affairs of every sort, large

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and small. Loans, wills, deeds of partnership, collection of taxes, even the farming of taxes from whole provinces, form the subjects of these remarkable documents.

"All the financial business of the Court was entrusted to this firm through several centuries. They collected the taxes with which the land, and the crops of corn, dates, etc., were burdened, also the dues for the use of the public roads and the irrigation canals, etc. Thus these insignificant-looking little cakes of clay unroll before us a vivid picture of Babylon's national life; we see people of all classes, from the highest Court officer to the lowest peasant and slave, crowd the courts of this treasure-house to transact their business."¹

We further learn from the tablets that these documents were negotiable, like letters of exchange or cheques, the latter being sometimes payable to bearer, unnamed. Documents recording obligations usually have several witnesses. As was the case in England not very long ago, some of these witnesses could not write, and as in our arrangements this difficulty was met by the individual making a "×" as

¹ Delitzsch, quoted by Ragozin, *Story of the Nations*, "Media, Babylon, and Persia," pages 246 and 247.

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his "mark," so on the tablets the ancient Assyrian or Babylonian who was unlearned made an impression of his finger-nail, against which his name was inscribed. One might almost imagine it as "Sennacherib Baladan, his mark."

The reference to letters of exchange and cheques is, to say the least, somewhat startling :

"And yet, if we stop to consider the peculiar conditions under which the commerce of the Assyrians and Babylonians was carried on, we shall be able to account for this at first sight strange fact ; we shall understand the causes which led these nations to invent the draft or exchange system so much earlier than others. Their trade, from the geographical position of their countries, was necessarily carried on by land, by means of caravans which had to traverse, in all directions, deserts infested by nomadic robbers. In such conditions one of the merchant's first cares was to find a way to avoid the transporting of money in cash to distant points. Everything made it desirable to find such a way : the cumbersome nature of metallic values, the number of beasts of burden required to carry great quantities of it, as well as the unsafe roads. Therefore, as soon as there was a creditor at one end of the caravan

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line and a debtor at the other, the idea of the draft system must have dawned on the mind of the creditor. This is so natural that a renewal of the same conditions gave rise to the same results, after a long oblivion, in the Middle Ages, when the Jews and the Italian merchants, hampered by the difficulties of transporting coined money and beset by innumerable risks, re-invented the letter of exchange, but in the more perfect form which has prevailed down to our own times.”¹

The commercial relations which are the subject of record on the recovered tablets include sales of houses, slaves, fields, estates, leases of houses and lands ; loans of money and goods (the interest in many cases being noted as twenty-five per cent. !), contracts ; securities for loans ; division of property ; dissolutions of partnership ; deeds of gift. Comment is unnecessary ; none but a people highly civilised would have prepared and kept such careful records.

3. The organisation of a people is a very clear indication of its status as a civilised community. It affects all phases of life,

¹ Lenormant, quoted by Ragozin, *Media, Babylon and Persia*, pages 249 and 250.

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political, social, legal, etc. Among the lower races of the world the organisation is primitive and simple. In the lands of Assyria it was extended and complex. It need not be dealt with specially here, as the various sections which follow will illustrate the matter in detail. Amongst the social arrangements may be mentioned marriage contracts, adoption of children, divorce decrees, etc.

4. Legal enactments date from the earliest times. Contemporary with Abraham there reigned in Babylonia a king named Khammurabi (the Amraphel of Genesis xiv.), whose code of laws, referred to on page 78, is a remarkable illustration of the early enactment of laws among the people. In later times they were recorded and carried out in a very careful manner. Legal decisions were duly recorded, and some of those which have been discovered date back to days before the reign of Khammurabi, and it would seem that, as in England, "case law" formed an important part of the legal code.

5. Science, too, was studied carefully. Much of what was believed has, of course, been

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proved to be incorrect by modern research, yet the knowledge that had been acquired was very far beyond what is usually supposed. Mathematics and astronomy in particular were closely studied, and numerous tables have been recovered which were compiled to assist in calculations. These include multiplication and division tables, tables of squares, square roots, geometrical progressions, etc.

The astronomical tablets which have been discovered are of considerable interest, for they have enabled investigators to ascertain to what extent the lunar and stellar tables of the Babylonians have scientific accuracy. Some of them contain references to eclipses which have enabled dates of events to be fixed. The astronomical knowledge possessed by the priests of the later periods of Babylonian history enabled them to form a comparatively accurate calendar, but in the earliest times it seems to have been chiefly applied to deducing astrological omens and forecasts. When it is remembered how short a time it is since astrology was believed in by the peoples of Europe, it will not detract much from our ideas of the

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civilisation of the peoples of Babylonia to know that it was studied there.

The reports addressed by astrologers from various cities in Assyria and Babylonia refer to the appearance of the new moon and to the length of the month, to lunar eclipses, to stars and constellations, to the signs of the Zodiac, to the appearances of clouds, and to rain, storms, etc. We also find references to the vernal equinox, recording the fact that "the day and the night were equal."

6. Education was a recognised institution. "The learning and tongue of the Chaldeans" is not a mere phrase, it indicates a fact. The original population and the culture of the lands were Sumerian. These were a non-Semitic people, as is clearly implied in Genesis x. The Semitic race which followed them adopted much of their learning and culture. As their language differed, it was necessary that there should be some means of making the earlier learning accessible, and syllabaries, as they are termed, were prepared. The following will illustrate two forms of these syllabaries.

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(a) Sumerian value : Sign : Assyrian name :

(b) Sumerian value : Sign : Assyrian name : Assyrian meaning.

They are thus a kind of dictionary, something like an English-French dictionary of to-day. In addition to these, there are lists of words of similar meaning (synonyms), grammatical examples, sayings in Sumerian with Assyrian translations, explanatory lists of words, etc.

“ The cuneiform script was invented by the primitive population of Chaldea, who spoke not a Semitic, but an agglutinative language, and in passing to the Semitic Babylonians not only did the pre-Semitic words denoted by the single characters become phonetic values, but words denoted by two or more characters became compound ideographs, the characters in compound representing a Semitic word, the syllables of which had no relation whatever to the phonetic values of the separate characters that composed it. It thus became necessary for the learner not only to commit to memory the actual syllabary, but also the hundreds of compound ideographs which existed by the side of it. When we further remember that the cuneiform characters are not pictorial, and that

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their shape, therefore, unlike the Egyptian hieroglyphics, offers nothing to assist the memory, we shall begin to understand what a labour it must have been to learn them, and consequently to what a wide extension of knowledge and literary activity the letters of Tel-el-Amarna testify.”¹

We may safely conclude, from the foregoing considerations, that there was a very real civilisation in Assyria and Babylon, a fact of considerable importance to us, for many reasons.

¹ Sayce : *Higher Criticism and the Monuments*, pages 50 and 51.

CHAPTER VI

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

RELIGION is a most important element in the lives of men and nations. It is a predominant influence by which character is formed. The nature of the religion will affect the actions of a people, and largely help to shape its destinies. If, therefore, we would have more than a superficial knowledge of nations, we must have some idea of their religion as well as of their deeds.

The religion of Babylonia and Assyria was a polytheism, a system in which the unity of the godhead was broken up into fragments, so that a number of deities were presented for the adoration and fear of the worshippers, each god and goddess having his or her own form, attributes, emblems, and temples, and having to do with some

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special phase of the matters which affected the people.

In the days immediately after the Flood religion was a pure monotheism, and there are indications that such a religion existed in Chaldea, although its adherents were few and it soon died out. Babylon was evidently the originating centre of the idolatry that soon manifested itself, and which ultimately swept over all peoples. This apostasy is attributed to Nimrod, the mighty hunter before the Lord. "He was powerful in hunting and in wickedness before the Lord, for he was a hunter of the sons of men [comp. Jer. xvi. 16], and he said to them, 'Depart from the judgment of the Lord and adhere to the judgment of Nimrod.'"¹ Josephus likewise says of him: "He persuaded mankind not to ascribe their happiness to God, but to think that his own excellency was the source of it. And he soon changed things into a tyranny, thinking that there was no other way to wean men from the fear of God than by making them rely upon his own power."² From his days a belief in a multiplicity of

¹ The Jerusalem Targum; quoted in the Companion Bible.

² Josephus, *ibid.*

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gods became the recognised religion in the world.

The religious beliefs of the Babylonians and Assyrians were naturally very much alike. The principal difference between them is that, in Babylon, supremacy seems to have been given to Bel or Merodach, whereas in Assyria Assur was the chief god. The latter was a warlike god, peculiarly appropriate to the military genius of the people.

It is not necessary to refer to all the gods and goddesses of the two nations, but it is desirable to glance at what is known of a few of the more important.

IL.—This god's name is found in the name of the city itself, Bab-Ilu. He is but a shadowy person; his attributes are, comparatively speaking, indistinct, and his name is of infrequent occurrence. The similarity between his name and the Hebrew El, which may be looked upon as the fundamental name of God, suggests that in Il we have a relic of the primitive religion when only one God was worshipped by all the descendants of Noah. If this be the

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case, it will explain why Il was a dim and vague memory in Babylon. No temples were erected to him, and his name was rarely incorporated into the names of people. Notwithstanding its place in the name of the city, there is, in the list of kings given in the Guide to the British Museum, only one name wherein it appears, Sumu-la-ilu. This fact is the more significant when it is pointed out that Sumu-la-ilu was a king of the first Babylonian Empire, a predecessor of Khammurabi, the contemporary of Abraham.

ASSUR is by far the most frequently mentioned of all the gods of either Assyria or Babylon. Assyria was the land of Assur, the inhabitants were his people, the enemies of Assyria were the enemies of Assur. Kings were placed on their thrones by him ; he gave them victory in their wars. Although the name has been defined as meaning the gracious one, on the monuments he is represented as an archer (usually ready to shoot) in a winged circle, a combination which has been recognised as an emblem of the trinity—Assur himself, the circle to represent the “Seed,” whilst the wings outstretched on

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each side signify the Spirit which "fluttered" in the creation epoch.¹

ANU, BEL, and EA (or Hea) constitute a triad, or trinity, representing in the official religion the three elementary deities of the heavens, the earth, and the sea. Anu's place was beyond the visible sky, Bel was prince of the air and the underworld, Ea was over the primordial deep, the dark waters which had filled the universe and out of which all things arose. In Bel we have the equivalent of the Phœnician Baal. Nineveh was "the city of Bel." His name is frequently incorporated into the names of men, and is so found in both countries (see also Merodach). He is referred to in the Bible in prophecies concerning the fall of Babylon as bowing down, confounded and punished. (Isa. xlvi. 1 ; Jer. l. 2, li. 44.)

In succession to this triad there was a second trinity consisting of the moon-god, Sin, the sun-god, Shamas, and the god of the atmosphere, whose name is unknown as it is never spelt phonetically, but is represented by a sign.

¹ Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, pages 18 and 19.

See illustration on page 48.

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It has been conjectured that it is Rimmon. Each of these names was constantly incorporated into the names of individuals, and many illustrations are to be found in the kings of both countries. Sin, the moon-god, was among the most widely worshipped. Two reasons may be adduced for this fact ; the first, that in the warm plains of Mesopotamia the coolness of the evening was more attractive than the heat of the day ; and the second, that, viewed in the depth of an Eastern sky, the moon gave a wonderful idea of infinity.

In addition to the sun- and moon-gods, there were those associated with the planets, as under :

Saturn	..	..	Nin or Ninip
Jupiter	..	..	Marduk or Merodach
Mars	..	..	Nergal
Venus	..	..	Ishtar
Mercury		..	Nebo

It is not necessary to refer to each of these, but two of them call for particular mention.

MERODACH is a god frequently referred to. He appears to have been identified with Bel. From earliest times Babylonian monarchs placed him in the highest ranks of deities,

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worshipping him as one of the first trinity of gods. The great temple of Babylon, known to the Greeks as the temple of Bel, was certainly dedicated to him. Merodach's ordinary titles are "the great," "the great Lord," "the prince of gods." He was also held in considerable honour in Assyria, being often coupled with Assur and Nebo as a war-god. His worship culminated in Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar and his successors. Then all the epithets of highest honour were heaped upon him, and he became almost an exclusive object of worship.

ISHTAR, unlike other female deities of Assyria and Babylon, retained her independent position as a goddess side by side with the male deities of the land. She appears in two differing aspects in the mythology, first as the goddess of battle, and secondly as the goddess of love. In the second form, in which she may be identified with Venus in Grecian mythology, she was worshipped with most licentious rites. She became associated in legend with Damuzi, or Tammuz, her lover. Tammuz being killed in early youth, she descended to the realms of the dead to recover him. The "weeping for

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Tammuz " on account of his death was not confined to the Babylonians. It was adopted by the Jews, and became one of the gravest charges against them in the time of the prophet Ezekiel (Ezek. viii. 13 and 14). The nature of the religious rites associated with Ishtar, or Venus, will account for the abhorrence with which it is mentioned in the Bible. ASTARTE is another name for Ishtar. The "groves" of the Old Testament were dedicated to this goddess, the name in the Hebrew being Ashera.

" The principal feature of the worship of Ashtoreth (Ishtar) has always been the sacred grove, whether of artificial planting or of nature's own providing, in wooded dells or on the slopes of Lebanon. . . . Near the altar was usually planted a 'sacred tree,' the Ashera, either a real tree or an imitation of conventional shape. . . . These are the 'high places' and the 'asherahs' so frequently and wrathfully denounced in the Bible, the heathen abominations into which Judah and Israel continually lapsed and for which the prophets as incessantly reproved them. . . . The 'hangings for the grove' (2 Kings, xxiii. 7) were of the richest tissues, mostly of fine purple,

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lavishly embroidered ; some served to make tents and pavilions in the sacred groves, luxurious resting-places for the worshippers who flocked thither as on some delightful pilgrimage or excursion, and who could think of no better way to honour the goddess of joy and sensual pleasure than spending whole nights in feasting and inordinate revelry within the sacred precincts, waited upon by the women and girls devoted to her service, and for whom this was an essential part of their religious duties." ¹

In most mythologies the gods have their female counterparts, and this rule was applicable to many of the gods of Babylon and Assyria. Among them it is only necessary to mention Bel's consort, Beltis, "the mother of the gods," "the great lady." Such expressions are sufficiently like the Romish titles for the Virgin Mary to suggest the close association which exists between the worship of Babylon of old and that of "Mystery Babylon the Great" (Rome).

The gods were worshipped by prayer, praises, and sacrifice. The prayers were offered both

¹ Ragozin, *Story of the Nations*, "Assyria," pages 112-14.

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for oneself and for others. The ceremonies were usually accompanied by the recitation of one or more hymns; these were written in Sumerian, the sacred language of Chaldea, precisely as Romish prayers are in Latin, the sacred language of the Roman Church. As the Sumerian language was not understood by the people generally, interlinear translations were provided with the ordinary language of the day to enable the people to follow. Modern Babylon has gone one step farther in the effort to keep the people in ignorance. They use the Latin language, and leave their deluded followers unaware of the meaning of the words used.

The mass of the people of Assyria and Babylon were sunk in superstition. The future was dreary. Hades, they were taught, was beneath the earth, where the spirits of the dead flitted about like bats, with dust for their food. A few might look for a happier future when they might ascend to "the land of the silver sky." The similarity of the essential features of the doctrines of "the two Babylons" is thus apparent. In this brief review of the religion

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of the earlier Babylon we find the Trinity, the immortality of the soul, Hades or hell, and heaven-going. Much more could have been mentioned, but would be outside the purpose before us now.¹

¹ For a detailed account of the parallels between the religion of Ancient and Modern Babylons, the reader is referred to Hislop's *Two Babylons*.



REPRESENTATION OF THE GOD ASSUR

CHAPTER VII

ASSYRIAN AND BABYLONIAN CHRONOLOGY

A PROBLEM which is sure, sooner or later, to confront the Bible student who gives attention to Babylonian and Assyrian archæology concerns the chronology of the Bible and that which has been reconstructed from the monuments. According to the former, some four thousand years intervened between the date of Adam's creation and the birth of Christ. It is therefore somewhat startling to find references to kings who are said to have reigned as early as 3800 B.C., i.e. well within the life of Adam himself ! It is no use ignoring the discrepancy ; it exists, and deserves some little examination.

How do Assyriologists arrive at their early dates ? One of the bases on which they have made their calculations is a reference on a cylinder of Nabonidus (*circa* 555-538 B.C.) in

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which he records that he discovered in the foundations of a temple at Agade an inscription of Sargon I, who, he alleges, reigned 3,200 years before him. If we could rely on this information, or know that it was based upon actual and recorded history, the matter would be settled very much to the detriment of the Bible. The whole value of the statement depends upon the authority upon which it was made. To use a parallel which will help us to appreciate the value of the record in itself, unsupported by other evidence, it is equal to a statement made at the present day concerning one of the judges of Israel, assuming that there existed no chronological records of the intervening years. The fact is, we do not know the authority upon which the statement as to the time was based, and therefore cannot accept the statement as the last word on the matter. The true position is set out by the British Museum authorities as under :

“ Recent excavation and research have shown that the scribes of Nabonidus exaggerated the interval separating the period of Naram-Sin (the son of Sargon) from their own time ; but

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we are as yet without the means of fixing a definite date for these early rulers in place of the traditional one.”¹

Speaking in round figures, it is not until we arrive at about 2000 B.C. that the dates given may be accepted as approximately correct, and it is significant that it is only at this period that the Guide to the British Museum commences to show dates against the names of the kings whose names are given. Before that there is simply a list of names. This is about the time of Abraham, who was a contemporary of Khammurabi, one of the kings in the first dated list. Even with these lists we come across considerable gaps in the continuity, one of them being of no less than 340 years.

We need not, therefore, be exercised unduly about the early dates attributed to many of the relics of Assyria and Babylon. The foundation for the chronology is frail, the breaks are frequent and of considerable length. Moreover, the kings are described as kings and rulers of Kish, Lagash, Sumer, Agade, Ur, Isin, Larsa,

¹ British Museum: Guide to the Babylonian and Assyrian Antiquities, page 3.

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and Erech, as well as of Babylon and Assyria. How often and to what extent these may have been contemporary with one another does not appear. On the other hand, when we come to the times when events and dates can be arranged consecutively, they are found to run side by side with the Scriptural records, and there is a substantial agreement between them, as will be apparent when we come to the various matters which have a bearing upon the Scriptures.

The most important factor in Assyrian chronology is what is termed the Eponym Canon, based upon a number of lists of eponyms which have been discovered. An eponym was an Assyrian official who held office for a period of one year, and whose name was used to date all the documents executed during his period of office. These officials were termed "Limmu," and the manner of dating was something like this: "Fourth year of Shalmaneser, limmu So-and-so." Sometimes, in addition, reference is made to some important event which occurred during the reign, such as "to the land of the Nairi," or "to the Land of Cedars." When,

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as sometimes happens, these lists refer to an eclipse of the sun or some other astronomical phenomenon, it is possible to approach to some real accuracy in the chronology. Several lists of eponyms have been found, covering the period from about 900 to 650 B.C. During this time, therefore, we have a complete list of kings which will be found very useful when an endeavour is made to consider the bearing of the remains of Assyrian palaces and records upon the Bible history.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CREATION TABLETS

AMONG the various tablets which have been recovered from the libraries of Assyria, few are of so great interest as those which are generally known as the Creation and Flood tablets. It had long been known, from the fragments of Berosus, the Chaldean historian, that the Babylonians had traditions concerning the Creation, the Deluge, and various other matters referred to in the Book of Genesis. It was therefore a great event when Mr. George Smith found some tablets which, on decipherment, were found to contain accounts of these traditions. The most interesting of them were—

(*a*) An account of Creation in six days ; more or less parallel with that recorded in Gen. i.

(*b*) A second account of the Creation derived from the Library of Cuthah and belonging to the oldest period of Babylonian literature.

The Creation Tablets

(c) A history of the conflict between Merodach (Bel) and Tiamat ; and

(d) A legend of the tower of Babel, etc.

Critics of the Bible have professed to see in the Chaldean account of Creation the source from which the Bible records have been taken. The best disproof of this contention will be to know what the Chaldean ideas really were, and to compare them with the simple account in Genesis. Times out of number have so-called philosophers endeavoured to prove that the latter account is a myth, but the Bible account, speaking only of the facts, does not interfere with, neither is it affected by, the hypotheses of philosophy. Often have men set up their theories, but, like Dagon before the Ark, they have fallen to the earth and been broken in pieces before the Word of God, while this has stood, and ever shall stand, in its sublime simplicity, towering above the wrecks of every false system of philosophy and religion.

What tradition and human imagination would make of the matter is amply illustrated in the tablets, particularly in a series of seven dealing with the Creation. The first tablet of

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this series describes the time when the heavens were not and the earth was not, when there were no plants, and before the gods had come into being, and when the water-deep was the source and origin of all things. It then deals with the plottings and rebellion of certain of the gods. The second tablet relates how Ea heard of the rebellion and eventually appealed to Marduk (the Merodach of the Bible), who consented to fight against Tiamat, one of the revolting gods, on condition that he was elected as the champion of the gods. The third tablet describes the meeting of the gods in council. The fourth tablet records the election of Marduk as the champion, and the details of the successful war which he waged on behalf of the gods against Tiamat.

“ He spread out his net to catch her, he drove the winds, which he had gathered together, down her throat, and he seized the spear and pierced through her carcase. He drove the weapon into her heart, he severed her inward parts, he vanquished her, he cut off her life. He split her like a flat fish, into two halves. From one of these halves he made the covering for the heavens, i.e. the firmament,

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and from the other he seems to have formed the earth.”¹

The fifth tablet recounts the formation of the stars, the establishing of the year, which was divided into twelve months, and the appointment of the moon “to determine the days.” It is supposed that this tablet also contained an account of the creation of vegetation, and perhaps of animals. The sixth tablet records the creation of man, who was made that the gods might have worshippers. To create man, Marduk caused another god to cut off his (Marduk’s) head, and taking bone and his own blood, he formed man. As Marduk was a god, he did not die even though his head was cut off. The seventh tablet recites a hymn to the gods, and a series of addresses in which Marduk is hailed by them under fifty titles of honour.

When this is compared with the simple account in Genesis, it is impossible for any unprejudiced reader to pretend that the Chaldean account is the basis of the Scriptural record. On the other hand, one can understand

¹ British Museum: Guide to the Babylonian and Assyrian Antiquities, pages 42 and 43.

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that the original revelation became corrupted, and when apostasy became rampant after the Flood, the mythical system of Babylon grew up, full of absurdities and extraordinary stories which contain their own refutation. The contrasts between the two records are more remarkable than the similarities. Particular reference may be made to the fact that the Babylonian account speaks of a time "before the gods had come into being," whereas the Bible opens with that impressive phrase, "In the beginning God . . ." The fight between Merodach and Tiamat is a puerile conception compared with the words of the inspired Book, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," and the following record of the second day's work :

"And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament." (Gen. i. 6 and 7.)

It is further noticeable that the fifth tablet

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refers to the moon but not to the sun, probably owing to the important position which the moon-god occupied in the Babylonian mythology. Finally, there is the creation of man from the blood of a god in the place of the Bible's statement that man was formed from the dust and became a living soul by the inbreathing of the breath of God.

To sum up, whilst the Bible record, by its simplicity and the entire absence of any attempt to explain the methods employed, carries a conviction of its truth to the reflecting reader, the tablet records clearly indicate the falling-away of the Chaldean religion from the primitive simplicity of the original teaching of God.

CHAPTER IX

THE FLOOD TABLETS

THAT a flood of great extent and destructive power has occurred since man has been on the earth few will venture to question. The almost universal tradition of such an event is in itself a testimony to its truth. The careful observations of men of science also afford evidence of the fact, and serve to give proof, if such be necessary, of the Bible narrative of the Noachian flood.

The French archæologist, Lenormant, has written in *Les Origines de l'histoire d'après la Bible* : " We are in a position to affirm that the account of the Deluge is a universal tradition in all branches of the human family, with the sole exception of the black race, and a tradition everywhere so exact and so concordant cannot possibly be referred to an imaginary myth. No religious or cosmogonic myth possesses this character of universality. It must necessarily

The Flood Tablets

be a reminiscence of an actual and terrible event, which made so powerful an impression upon the imagination of the first parents of our species that their descendants could never forget it."

The Babylonians were no exception ; they had a tradition of the Flood, a tradition in which the various incidents in connection with it are referred to in considerable detail. In this matter, also, the critics profess to see in the Babylonian account the origin from which the Bible record was copied, but, as in the case of the Creation, it is only necessary to compare the two accounts to see which is the true and which the mythical. It is interesting to note that in the mythical history of Babylonia ten kings are alleged to have reigned at the time of the Flood, whilst in the Scriptures Noah represents the tenth generation, counting Adam as the first. The duration of these reigns is enormous, thereby indicating their mythical character. It seems likely that the tradition of these kings is based on the actual facts of history as indicated in the Mosaic account.

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The Babylonian account has come down in a series of tablets which are known as the Gilgamesh Series, so called because they deal with the adventures of a mythical hero named Gilgamesh. The legends in connection with him are of great antiquity, some of the incidents being portrayed on seal-cylinders belonging to the earliest times. With these adventures we are not concerned, but only with the story of the Flood which is reputed to have been told to him by Sît-napishtim, the Babylonian Noah, whom he met after crossing the "Waters of Death." An epitome of the account is as follows, abridged from the particulars given in the Guide published by the Authorities of the British Museum, dealing with the Assyrian and Babylonian Antiquities:

The gods determined to send a deluge upon the earth, and one Sît-napishtim, was warned by the god Ea of their design. In obedience to Ea he collected wood and materials and made a barge 120 cubits wide. On this he built a deck-house, 120 cubits high, divided into six stories, each containing nine rooms. The outside was smeared with bitumen and the inside

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with pitch. Having slaughtered oxen and made a feast, Sît-napishtim, with all his family and belongings, including his gold and silver, entered into the ship. The same night a mighty tempest arose, with terrible thunder and lightning and torrents of rain which continued for six days and six nights, until the tops of the mountains were overwhelmed. On the seventh day the storm abated and the sea went down, but by this time all mankind, with the exception of those in the ship, had been destroyed. The ship drifted until it grounded on the top of a high mountain. Seven days later Sît-napishtim sent forth a dove, but she found no resting-place and returned to the ship ; after a further interval he sent forth a swallow, which also returned to the ship ; but when, some time after, he sent forth a raven, the bird flew away, and although it approached and croaked, it did not re-enter the ship. Sît-napishtim then knew that the waters had abated, and, having come forth with his family and the beasts of the field, he offered up a sacrifice to the gods upon the mountain. Immortality was conferred upon him by the god Enlil, and he took up his

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abode in the remote region near the mouth of the river where Gilgamesh had found him.

It will be observed that the agreement between the foregoing and the Biblical record is very considerable, in which it differs from the creation records. This difference is probably due to the fact that the Flood made such a deep impression upon those who survived the terrible calamity that they handed down the details of the event at considerable length, whilst the nature of the events themselves was such as to remain in the minds of any who were told of them. There are differences, but they are not in themselves material, and some of them are clearly traceable to the conditions which were in existence in the lands of the Tigris and Euphrates. One important difference is found in a fact of great import. In the Bible record it is said, "The Lord shut him in" (Gen. vii. 16), whereas in the Babylonian account Sît-napishtim shut the door. The divergence may seem but small, but really it is very significant, for the Scriptural version emphasises the fact that the salvation provided was essentially of God. The principal differ-

The Flood Tablets

ence is really in the setting of the two records. That of the Bible arises out of the preceding history, in which the growing evils are traced, and the uprise of a reign of corruption and violence is recorded which furnished the reasons for the Flood. With the Babylonian account it is quite otherwise. There the account is enshrined in a purely mythological description of the adventures of Gilgamesh and his friend, half man, half beast, of the troubles which befel him on account of his refusal of the love of the goddess Ishtar, his battle with a bull created by the god Anu to destroy him because of his rejection of the advances of Ishtar, an ascent of the Mountain of Sunset, his meeting with a scorpion-man, etc. Such things have only to be mentioned to indicate that the Bible supplies the original record of the great judgment that came upon the earth, whereas the records on the tablets are evidently the traditions which had survived, mixed with errors and mythological details.

Such a conclusion may be different from that usually set forth in these days of Biblical criticism, but it is the only one that the facts of

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the case justify. Placing Chaldean legends of the Creation and Flood side by side with the Bible records of these events enables us to appreciate the simplicity of the latter, and thereby realise their truth.

CHAPTER X

UR OF THE CHALDEES—THE MIGRATIONS OF ABRAHAM

IN passing from matters of a general character to those which are historical, it will be well to indicate the principles on which it is proposed to proceed. It is not intended to refer to every king of Assyria and Babylon of whom anything is known. The purpose in view is to assist Bible students, and the matters to be dealt with will be directly subservient to this object. Our review will run parallel with the inspired record, and will only treat of those periods when Israel and Babylon or Assyria were either directly or indirectly in contact with each other, or when certain facts in relation to either Assyria or Babylon explain the things which happened in Israel.

In following this programme, we shall sometimes pass over considerable periods, whereas

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at others the history of kings who reigned one after the other will need to be dealt with. This is really the case when once the nation of Assyria came in contact with Israel and was manifested as "the rod of God's anger."

The history of Israel commences with their great progenitor, Abraham. At the time when he first appears upon the pages of the Bible he was a dweller in Ur of the Chaldees, a city in the south of Babylonia, the land of his nativity. Ur, now known as Mukeyyer, was about one hundred and twenty miles nearer the sea than it is to-day, for the waters of the rivers, constantly bringing down the soil from the higher reaches, have caused the land to extend far beyond its ancient limits. Ur was one of the most ancient of the Chaldean cities. Its name signifies "the city." It was apparently a maritime town, and for a time the seat of a monarchy ; it was a city of a sacred character, its principal temple being dedicated to the moon-god. In this city Abraham received his call to leave his country and his friends and journey to an unknown destination. With his father, his brother's son Lot, and his wife, he

Ur of the Chaldees

left his home and journeyed as far as Haran, a city in northern Mesopotamia. Here for a time they stayed. Why should they have remained here after travelling something like a thousand miles ?

The question is answered by the discoveries of the archæologist, for it has been found that, like Ur, Haran was a city devoted to the worship of the moon-god. Terah was not a worshipper of the one true God. "Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood, even Terah the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor ; and they served other gods." (Josh. xxiv. 2.) He was presumably addicted to the worship of the moon-god Sin, and, finding himself surrounded by associations in accord with his customary worship, he decided to go no farther.

At Haran they would be in an outpost of Chaldea, and on a high-road traversed by the caravans of merchandise. Here later Nahor and his family came and founded a settlement. Abraham refers to it as his country when he afterwards sent the eldest servant of his house to fetch thence a wife for his son Isaac. It

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became a kind of second home, midway between his early associations with all the amenities of organised life in Ur, and his life as a sojourner, which was to be his lot for the rest of his days, "dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob," confessing that he was but a stranger and a pilgrim in the land which was promised to him by God, and guaranteed to him by an everlasting covenant.

It was only when his father was dead that Abraham moved forward into the country that God would show him—the Promised Land, Canaan. Of this land God said to him, "Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it: for I will give it thee." (Gen. xiii. 17.) In this land Abraham stayed, with a brief exception, until he died, "not having received the promise" (Heb. xi. 13 and 39), to wait in the dust of the earth until the time for its fulfilment shall arrive. The only incident connected with his sojourn in the land to which it is necessary to refer here is the separation from him of his nephew Lot, who chose to reside in the "ciccar of Jordan" and the city of Sodom. Out of this incident

Ur of the Chaldees

circumstances arose which led to his one remaining contact with Chaldea to which reference is made in the Scriptures and which is dealt with in the following chapter. There was a time when the account in question was said to be totally unhistorical. No such assertion can be made to-day ; archæology has once and for all vindicated the historicity of the incident.

CHAPTER XI

KHAMMURABI

It is appropriate that in commencing the historical review of Babylonia the first king to engage our attention was a contemporary of Abraham—Khammurabi. He was a king of what is described as the First Babylonian Empire, and is the Amraphel mentioned in Gen. xiv. This identity will be more apparent if the names are placed side by side in syllables :

Am - raph -el.
Khammu- rabi.

The “ el ” in the first line is the Hebrew word for God, and is added to the actual name, as was frequently done by the Israelites and other early peoples.

The age of Abraham was evidently one of change. Peoples were in motion, and rivals for supremacy struggled for the mastery in

Khammurabi

Babylonia and the surrounding countries. In the annals of Ashur-bani-pal he records that he conquered Elam and brought back an image of the goddess Nana which a king of Elam, Kudur-Nankhundi, had carried away from Babylonia some sixteen centuries previously. The tablets recording this are preserved in the British Museum. This is an important allusion, for it enables us to reconstruct a little of the history, and to find that it is in accord with the statements of Genesis in reference to the times of Abraham. Inscriptions have been found at Ur of the Chaldees concerning a later governor of Elam, Kudur Mabug, who refers to himself as prince of Syria.

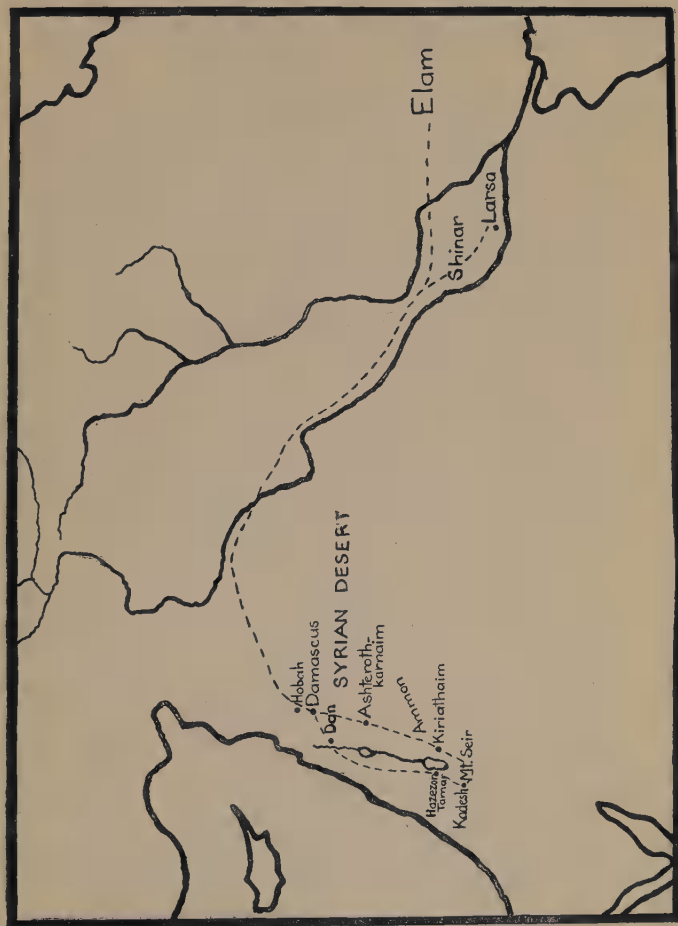
We may now turn to the account in Gen. xiv. It will be observed that it supposes a somewhat remarkable political situation. In the first place, it is dated by the reign of Khammurabi, king of Shinar, or Babylon. Yet the predominant power is evidently Elam, for the people against whom the combined armies marched had served Kudur Lagamar (Chedalaomer), but had rebelled against him. The expedition was therefore intended to

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re-establish his authority. Associated with Kudur Lagamar and Khammurabi were two other kings, Eri-aku, King of Larsa (Ellasar), and Tadkhula (Tidal) referred to in Genesis as King of Nations. The title used on the Babylonian inscriptions is the Chief of the Unman Manda, and refers to the barbarian peoples who lived eastward in the Khurdish mountain district.

These were the peoples who invaded Canaan on the expedition which is before us. An examination of the chapter in question, with a map beside us,¹ will illustrate the far-reaching character of the movement of the army which accompanied Kudur Lagamar. With troops gathered from Elam on the Persian Gulf, from Larsa in southern Babylonia, from Shinar or Babylon, and from the Kurdish Mountains beyond, they must first of all have marched right through the Euphrates valley, probably along the very route which had been followed by Abraham in his journey from Ur of the Chaldees. Turning to the south after passing the Syrian desert, they would reach Damascus, and then, keeping to the east of the Jordan valley, they

¹ See map, opposite.



MAP ILLUSTRATING THE MARCH OF CHEDALAOIMER

Khammurabi

would traverse the plateau which is there until they met the Rephaim in Ashteroth Karnaim, a few miles to the east of the Sea of Galilee. After defeating them, Kudur Lagamar and his associated kings defeated the Zuzim who occupied the land of the Ammonites (Deut. ii. 20). Still journeying southward, they dealt with the Emim in Kiriathaim, east of the Dead Sea, in the territory assigned to Reuben, afterwards possessed by the Moabites (Jer. xlviii. 1). Thence they passed to Mount Seir and Petra to the south of the Dead Sea, defeating the Horites, who were the original inhabitants of that district. Turning northward from this point, they passed to the west of the Dead Sea to Kadesh and Hazezon Tamar, either the same as, or close to, Engedi, on its western shores. Here they were brought into contact with the territory ruled over by the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim, and Bela. In the conflict which ensued these kings were thoroughly defeated and fled, and Lot, who had been dwelling in Sodom, was taken prisoner by the Elamites and their allies. The forces probably returned by the Jordan valley to Dan. Here

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Abraham, having heard of the capture of Lot, overtook them with his servants and allies, and falling upon them by night defeated the victorious hosts, pursuing them as far as Hobah, to the left of Damascus.

It is worth while studying the map in connection with this expedition, as it gives some idea of the military activities of the time. The round from Elam to Petra and thence through Palestine to Elam again is a very great distance, and the conception of such a campaign testifies to the development of the peoples with whom we have to do.

The contemporary existence of the peoples referred to in Gen. xiv is clearly indicated in the records which have been disinterred in recent times, and the political situation required by the Bible history is found to be exactly what the records indicate. The following extract will be interesting in this connection :

“ From about 2500 B.C. to 2200 B.C. no city succeeded in permanently retaining power in Babylonia ; the rule of one city rising as that of another declined. About the latter period, however, we find the Semitic king of Babylon

Khammurabi

called Khammurabi gaining great influence in the country, and his power eventually became so great that he was able to expel the Elamites, who under their kings Kudur-Mubug and his sons Arad-Sin and Rim-Sin had effected a settlement in the ancient Sumerian cities of Ur and Larsa. Khammurabi established a powerful kingdom with its capital at Babylon, and the numerous legal, commercial, religious, and other documents which were written during the reigns of himself and his successors Samsu-iluna, Abêshu, Ammi-ditana, Ammi-zaduga, and Samsu-ditana, prove that the people of the country had reached a very high pitch of civilisation.”¹

Kudur Lagamar had assisted Eri-aku (whose name is sometimes known as Rim-Sin) against Khammurabi, but was defeated, and eventually Khammurabi reigned over all the lands where the Chaldean language was spoken. His reign lasted for fifty-five years. He also claimed the title of King of Martu, that is, of the lands by the Mediterranean, a point of interest in view of the application of the code referred to later. Khammurabi was a really great king for those

¹ British Museum: Guide to the Babylonian and Assyrian Antiquities, page 4.

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early times, devoting his energy to public works for the benefit of his people. To prevent the inundation of the land, he caused a great canal to be excavated, afterwards known as "the Royal Canal of Babylon." It is certainly one of the earliest irrigation works mentioned in history.

"From this canal innumerable branches carried the fertilising waters through the country. It was and remained the greatest work of the kind, and was, fifteen centuries later, the wonder of the foreigners who visited Babylon. Its constructor did not overrate the benefit he had conferred when he wrote in an inscription which can scarcely be called boastful : I have caused to be dug the Nahr-Khammurabi, a benediction for the people of Shumir and Accad. I have directed the waters of its branches over the desert plains ; I have caused them to run in the dry channels and thus given unfailing waters to the people . . . I have changed desert plains into well-watered lands. I have given them fertility and plenty, and made them the abode of happiness ! " ¹

Khammurabi's greatest title to fame is a code of laws inscribed upon a stele, a

¹ Ragozin, *Story of the Nations*, "Chaldea," pages 227 and 228.



STELE OF KHAMMURABI INSCRIBED WITH HIS CODE OF LAWS

Khammurabi

cast of which can be seen in the British Museum.

The stele was set up in Esagila, the temple of Merodach in Babylon, so that it might be consulted by any man who considered himself wronged or oppressed. It was afterwards carried away by an Elamite king to Susa. The original is now in the Louvre in Paris.

At the top of the stele is a representation of the king receiving the laws from the sun-god, Shamash. On the lower part the laws are inscribed. It is to be regretted that the code is not complete, five columns having been erased, probably when the stele was taken to Elam. But although the erased section detracts somewhat from any comparison we may make between the code and the laws of Moses, the position of the missing portion indicates that the laws which have been erased referred to property and trade, and their absence will not affect the general lesson to be drawn from the suggested comparison. Moreover, some at least of them can be supplied by fragments of the code found on tablets of Babylonian origin. The code of Khammurabi is essentially a human

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one. Its basis is the sanctity of property more than of human life. So noticeable is this fact that in a translation of these laws the word "murder" finds no place in the index, whilst various terms defining or attaching to offences against property are constantly occurring—e.g., "abatement of rent," "accidental loss," "agent," "allotment," "allowances," "assessment of damages," "assignment for debt," to take the first letter of the alphabet only.¹

There are certain features in which there may be detected a similarity between the two codes, but the prevailing impression is as suggested above, and the punishments include the perpetration of cruelties entirely foreign to the Divinely-given law of Moses, such as, cutting out the tongue, tearing out the eye, cutting off the breast.

Again, there is a marked humanity to the oppressed in God's law. "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee . . . thou shalt not oppress him." In the laws of Khammurabi death is the penalty for harbouring or

¹ Johns, *The Oldest Code of Laws in the World*.

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helping a slave, and a reward is to be given to the man who drives a slave back to his master.

But the chief feature is the entire absence of the higher principles of the Mosaic enactments. Taking the Ten Commandments as an example, the code of Khammurabi had no reference to the supremacy of God, no prohibition of idolatry or of the profane use of the name of the Deity. It makes no provision for sabbath rest and sanctity, has no specific enactment for honouring parents, and there is no mention of the sin of covetousness. It is essentially a human document, the product of a system based upon a nation's organisation and designed to give all possible support to "the upper classes" of the State. Sin is only to be considered as a thing contrary to the proper carrying on of the affairs of the king. It is not, as in the Mosaic code, abhorrent. In Israel sin was to be put away ; it had to be regarded in its bearing upon the relationship of God and man. In the code of Khammurabi there is no such idea.

The lesson to be derived from the foregoing comparison is obvious. Why are the Mosaic

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enactments, given in a time when the Khammurabi code was already in existence and highly esteemed, on a so much higher plane? Why does God come first in them? Why is life more than property? Why is sin to be put away and atoned for? The only answer is that supplied by the Scriptures themselves: "And God spake all these words"; "And the Lord spake unto Moses."

Remembering the widespread sway of Babylon in the times of Khammurabi, and the evident paramountcy he had over Syria, it is interesting to note some enactments which throw light on certain actions of the patriarchs. They are expressed thus:

The woman of inferior rank, introduced into the household as a concubine, occupied a different position according to the manner in which this introduction came about. If it were the legitimate wife who had herself given the slave to her husband, and that she had borne him children, he was precluded from taking another concubine (Law 144); he could claim this right only if the legitimate wife had not had children either herself or by the intervention

Khammurabi

of a slave substitute belonging to her, but the concubine had no right to an equal rank with the wife (145). The slave substitute, on her side, received a different treatment according to whether she had or had not borne children to her master: in the former case, her mistress might not sell her if there arose a quarrel with regard to the children, but she could brand her and degrade her once more to the rank of a slave (146); in the latter case she could sell her whenever she desired (147).¹ The circumstances are not identical with the cases of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar, or Jacob and his wives and their hand-maids, but they serve to illustrate the incidents in question, and show that they were in accord with the generally-recognised customs of the times.

The Babylonian kingdom established by Khammurabi continued under his successors until the dynasty was overthrown by an invasion of Hittites from Cappadocia. Subsequently Assyria became a separate kingdom, eventually becoming the predominant power in the country. Of this period there is not much

¹ Maspero, *The Struggle of the Nations*, page 400.

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known in the way of history, there is little to interest us, and there was no recorded contact with the "people of the Book."

CHAPTER XII

THE TEL-EL-AMARNA TABLETS

REFERENCE has been made already to the tablets which were discovered in 1887 at Tel-el-Amarna, in Egypt. Although they are primarily connected with Egyptian history, they merit a passing allusion in our review of the events of Babylonia. They were principally sent to and from Egyptian kings and officials; they are written in the Babylonian cuneiform script. From certain of them we learn that, prior to the exodus of Israel from Egypt, the kings of Babylon and Egypt were in correspondence with each other. Letters exist which were sent from Burraburiash of Babylon to Amenhotep IV of Egypt which indicate that the two nations were allies, and that a matrimonial alliance between the two families was contemplated, if it did not actually take place. Other letters of the series were from kings of

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Assyria, Ashur-uballit and Ramman-narari, to the king of Egypt ; in the latter case there was an appeal for help against the Khatti. The tablets include letters from various other peoples in western Asia, including those of Jerusalem, to the kings of Egypt. They serve to bring into proper perspective the relationships existing between the peoples of the two River civilisations of Egypt and Mesopotamia, and the land which God chose to be the centre of His purposes in the earth.

CHAPTER XIII

THE RISE OF ASSYRIA

FROM the days of Khammurabi of Babylon to the period of the decline of Israel the peoples of Mesopotamia were in movement, various races taking their place in the struggles for existence and supremacy.

For a long time the kings of Assyria seem to have found the task of keeping the surrounding nations in check sufficient to occupy all their activities. A few names stand out here and there (such as Shalmaneser I and Tiglath Pileser I) as they recorded their conquests, or as references are made to them by later kings, but generally speaking there is not a great deal known of what was taking place in that area, and the activities of the Assyrians did not often reach Syria. Other peoples, such as the Hittites and the Phœnicians, took their place in the activities of the times. These facts,

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coupled with the decline of Egypt, for a time left the land of Canaan free for the series of events which include the conquest under Joshua, the unsettled period of the Judges, and the uprising of the monarchy under Saul, David, and Solomon. Only once during that long period was there any connection with Mesopotamia. In the early portion of the time of the Judges, Cushan-Risathaim, king of Aram-Naharaim (A.V. Mesopotamia), oppressed Israel for eight years, at the end of which time they were delivered by Othniel. So far nothing seems to have been discovered bearing upon this incident in the Assyrian records.

Although great warriors arose from time to time and carried Assyrian arms into other lands, it was not until the ninth century B.C. that Assyria came to the front as a world-power, able to establish a settled authority over surrounding nations.

“In the reign of Tukulti-Ninib II the Assyrians again emerge as a conquering nation. The northern highlands of Nairi were once more subdued by this monarch, who was succeeded in 885 B.C. by his son Ashur-nasir-pal, one of the greatest of the Assyrian kings. His con-

The Rise of Assyria

quests extended on every side, and laid the foundation for the further successes of future reigns. His last campaign, which opened the road to the extension of his empire westward, was against the inhabitants of northern Syria (867 B.C.)”¹

This is equivalent to the period of Jehoshaphat and his immediate successors, and from this point the contact between Assyria or Babylon and Israel is frequent, almost continuous. A series of well-known names comes before us, and even the breaks in the direct contact are of interest in relation to the Scriptural history of Israel.

ASHUR-NASIR-PAL, who succeeded Tukulti-Ninib II, was a contemporary of Jehoshaphat of Judah and Omri and Ahab of Israel, whilst Egypt was ruled over by the XXIInd Dynasty. There is no reference to him in the Bible, but he may be taken as a typical Assyrian king in the period when Israel was being brought into direct contact with Assyria. It will therefore be useful to review briefly the leading features of his reign. With certain military officers, he

¹ British Museum: Guide to the Babylonian and Assyrian Antiquities, page 6.

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conspired against his father and deposed him. He upheld the military prowess of his ancestors, and was most ferocious and warlike towards the nations around. He records most abominable cruelties with vaunting complacency. His campaigns included one as far as the Mediterranean, when he received tribute from Tyre, Sidon, and the surrounding districts. He refrained from going south of the River Orontes, where a formidable power could have opposed him, that of Syria, which would have been a serious addition to the number of his enemies. Ashurnasir-pal was a great patron of art, and during his reign art, literature, and architecture were greatly encouraged. He rebuilt Calah, where he erected a palace which became his favourite residence. The walls were adorned with bas-reliefs of various scenes, religious and historical, also those illustrating the chase. A series of them will be found in the Nimroud Gallery of the British Museum. Water was brought to the city by tunnel and aqueduct. An examination of Ashurnasir-pal's sculptures will give a clear idea of the character of the people into whose hands the Israelites were

The Rise of Assyria

to be delivered on account of their unfaithfulness. The king's own records refer, for example, to flaying alive, pyramids of heads, walling-up prisoners, impaling on stakes, and even worse cruelties. He has been termed "a royal butcher of the worst type." Yet he was a successful ruler, and when he died he left an overflowing treasury, an efficient army, and a people confident in their future. They were prepared for their work as a sharp axe to cut down the corrupt tree of Israel.

CHAPTER XIV

SHALMANESER II

SHALMANESER II, the son and successor of Ashur-nasir-pal, was a contemporary of Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, Ahaziah, and Athaliah of Judah, and of Ahab, Ahaziah, Jehoram, and Jehu of Israel. Ben-hadad and Hazael of Syria, and Mesha of Moab, were likewise contemporary with him. The mention of these names will indicate the stirring times in which he lived.

During the reign of Shalmaneser, Assyria seems to have been engaged in almost ceaseless wars, for his reign of thirty-five years saw no less than thirty-two campaigns. Our chief interest in the history of his reign lies in the fact that now, for the first time, Assyria came into immediate contact with unfaithful Israel, so that Shalmaneser has a place in Bible

Shalmaneser II

history, although his name does not occur in the Scriptures. (The Shalmaneser referred to in 2 Kings xvii is another king of the same name who reigned some eighty years later.) He was thus the first king under whom Assyria became "the rod of God's anger" against His people, although he knew it not.

Shalmaneser carried out warlike expeditions against the surrounding nations, causing one king after another to become his vassal and pay tribute, until he reigned from the sources of the Tigris to the Lebanon and to the Great Sea. His growing power evidently caused much alarm among the nations who still retained their independence, and a number of them appear to have made a confederacy for the purpose of resisting the further advance of the Assyrian arms. Among these kings were Ahab of Israel, who reigned at Samaria, Ben-hadad of Syria, whose capital was at Damascus, and the king of Hamath, whose territory lay still farther north. These three kings' territory, it will be observed, formed a continuous connection, and all were threatened by Assyria

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when its dominion extended to the sea-coast.

It will be remembered that about this time there had been war between Ahab and Ben-hadad, consequent on the insolent demands of the latter. In that conflict Ahab had inflicted a severe defeat upon Ben-hadad, but had not pursued his advantages, as might have been expected. On the contrary, he had entered into a league with his former adversary, an action which called forth the rebuke of the prophet because he had let go out of his hand a man whom God had appointed for utter destruction (1 Kings xx. 42). The action of Ahab, as recorded in the Scriptures, seems a remarkable one, for he evidently let go advantages which worldly prudence would have suggested should be maintained. The testimony of the monuments explains his action. Looking at the affairs of his time as a politician, he saw the dangers that were ahead in the threatening progress of Assyria, hence his willingness to make easy terms for Ben-hadad, so that they might, in common with others, unite to prevent the further progress of the

Shalmaneser II

Assyrian king. The confederacy appears to have included, besides Syria and Israel, the people of Hamath, Arvad, Ammon, and in the conflict that ensued there was even a small contingent of troops from Egypt, a fact which indicates how great was the fear of the supremacy of Assyria. A keenly-contested battle took place at Karkar, on the Orontes. Shalmaneser claimed to have the victory and boasted of his success, but there is good reason to believe that it was a vainglorious boast, having no real basis in fact, for the Assyrians beat a retreat immediately after their pretended victory, without prisoners and almost without booty.

The history thus serves to illustrate the Scriptural record, and it is most interesting to find the recovered inscriptions throwing light on unexplained incidents in the Bible record. For example, in the Nimroud Central Saloon of the British Museum there is a stele of Shalmaneser II, with a figure of the king in relief. It describes at some length his military expeditions, including one during which he attacked Irkhulêni, king of

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Hamath, who was associated with a number of allies, including "Ahab of the land of Israel."

After a campaign against Babylon which secured Assyria from any attack from the south, further encounters took place between the Assyrian king and the Syrian confederates, although the members of the confederation varied from time to time. In the next encounters Ahab was not present. Apparently Syria had not carried out certain terms of the treaty with Israel. Ahab consequently made a league with Jehoshaphat of Judah against Syria, and met with his death at Ramoth Gilead as recorded in 1 Kings xxii. Of these conflicts it is not necessary to speak in detail. Ben-hadad, assisted by his allies, again met the forces of Assyria, and although Shalmaneser claimed the victory, it is significant that he took no territory, and that afterwards he turned his attention to other enemies.

When next we take up the history, important changes had taken place. Ben-hadad had been murdered and succeeded by Hazael, as foretold by Elisha. Jehu, having received

Shalmaneser II

a Divine commission to destroy the House of Ahab, carried out that work and became king of Israel. Meanwhile Shalmaneser, probably encouraged by the changes that had taken place, had been preparing for another attempt to impose his sway over Syria. When the Syrian and Assyrian armies met Hazael was defeated, with terrible losses, but was able to regain his city of Damascus, where he was besieged. It is to be noted, however, that Shalmaneser does not claim to have captured the city, but he devastated the whole of the surrounding country. He then proceeded to the sea-coast, where he received the submission of, and tribute from, Tyre and Sidon, and also of "Jehu the son of Khumri (Omri)," as he terms him in his inscription. Jehu's tribute was probably an acknowledgment of his debt to Assyria in preventing any further aggression on the part of the Syrians in Palestine. The Bible student will not need to be reminded that Jehu was not the son of Omri. That Shalmaneser should have so termed him is an indication of the prestige of the House of Omri. Omri had been a warlike and organising king, one who so impressed

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his personality upon his contemporaries that the land of Israel became known for a time as Beth Omri. In commemoration of his triumph, Shalmaneser caused an obelisk of black alabaster to be set up. It is now in the Nimroud Central Saloon of the British Museum, and is usually known as "The Black Obelisk."

This Obelisk is most interesting. At the top and bottom of the four sides is inscribed an account of Shalmaneser's expeditions, and between the writing there are five rows of small reliefs, making twenty in all. These represent the payment of tribute of five different countries. Each series commences on the west side of the monolith, the second from the top being "Payment of tribute by Jehu, the son of Khumri, who brought silver, gold, lead, and bowls, dishes, cups, and other vessels of gold." Near the king is the usual emblem of the Assyrian god Assur, with its trinitarian suggestions. No reference to Jehu is made in the top and bottom inscription, but Shalmaneser alludes to Hazael, and claims to have captured from him 1,121 chariots and 470 battle-horses



THE BLACK OBELISK OF SHALMANESER

The second row of figures represents the offering of "John the son of Omri."

Shalmaneser II

and his whole camp. It will be noticed that the association of names on the obelisk is in exact accordance with the Scriptural history, and the Black Obelisk is therefore a most interesting confirmation of the truth of the Bible.

The rest of the reign of Shalmaneser was spent in comparative quietness. The king remained at home, leaving what military efforts were necessary to his generals. The close of his reign was marred by a rebellion of one of his sons. It was unsuccessful, and on his death Shalmaneser was succeeded by another of his sons, Shamshi-Ramman. Altogether the reign of Shalmaneser, although he is not mentioned in the Bible, is, in the monumental records, a most remarkable comment upon, and testimony to, the accuracy of the Bible. Confirmation of Biblical records is helpful in endeavouring to impress others with the position of the Bible as a revelation from God and an authentic record of the past, particularly of God's dealings with Israel. To many, however, it will be still more interesting to find that these ancient records of Assyria explain the

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reason for certain events which are related in the Scriptures, and of this phase of usefulness the reign of Shalmaneser II is a remarkable example.

CHAPTER XV

THE SUCCESSORS OF SHALMANESER

FOR something like eighty years after the death of Shalmaneser the throne of Assyria was occupied by a number of kings of whom not much is known. In the reign of his immediate successor, Shamshi-Ramman, the Euphrates was the western boundary of the Assyrian dominion, and Syria was therefore free from attack, and conflicts with Babylonia and other peoples occupied all his energies. Ramman-Nirari, who followed, appears to have been a warlike king, who claims to have subjected the land of " Bit-Khumri " (Beth Omri), but no inscriptions have been discovered to fill in any details of his campaigns, which were usually in other directions.

During this period Syria revived after the defeats of Shalmaneser's time, and became the principal source of the troubles which arose in

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Israel, for "Hazeal [of Syria] smote them in all the coasts of Israel; from Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, and the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aroer, which is by the River Arnon, even Gilead and Bashan." (2 Kings x. 32 and 33.) He pursued his advantages southward and took Gath, and then, threatening Jerusalem, received tribute from Jehoash, king of Judah. To pay this tribute, Jehoash took the gold and treasures from the temple of the Lord and from his own house. All the peoples of southern Syria became subject to Hazeal of Damascus, and the Syrian power was paramount for a time.

Three other kings followed Ramman-Nirari, and during their reigns Assyria was defeated by other nations and suffered a decline. She became involved in difficulties, and showed signs of exhaustion. Plague and civil strife had their part in this result, and finally a revolution took place which resulted in the throne being occupied by one of the greatest conquerors in history. It is probable that the mission of Jonah to Nineveh is to be dated during this period of eclipse of Assyrian power. Jonah is

The Successors of Shalmaneser

referred to in connection with the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel, who was contemporary with the period of Assyrian history now under review. If, as is probable, Jonah lived then, some light is thrown on the references to the actions of the king of Assyria as recorded in his book. One could hardly imagine Shalmaneser or Tiglath-Pileser issuing a command to repentance at the preaching of a Hebrew prophet, but under the weaker kings who preceded the latter there is no difficulty in understanding the action of the king on the pronouncement of impending doom.

During this period is also to be placed the revival of the power of Israel under Jehoash and Jeroboam II, when "the Lord saw the affliction of Israel," and Jeroboam "restored the coast of Israel from the entering in of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which He spake by the hand of His servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gath-hepher." (2 Kings xiv. 25.)

CHAPTER XVI

TIGLATH-PILESER

TIGLATH-PILESER, whose reign now demands attention, was contemporary with Jotham and Ahaz of Judah, with Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, and Hosea of Israel, and with Rezin, the last king of Syria. In Egypt the conditions were bad: three dynasties, the XXIIIrd, XXIVth, and XXVth, appear to have existed more or less contemporaneously.

Tiglath-Pileser is the first Assyrian king who is mentioned by name in the Scriptures. In Chronicles he is termed Tilgath-Pilneser, presumably the error of a scribe in copying at some time. As has been pointed out, he came to the throne as the result of a revolution. His original name appears to have been Pul, or Phul; and he took the name of Tiglath-Pileser after an earlier king of that name who reigned some two hundred years previously. This

Tiglath-Pileser

double name has caused a difficulty in the past to Bible students, and the proof which has been forthcoming in recent times, that Pul and Tiglath-Pileser are one and the same, has been a welcome solution. In Chronicles we read : “ And the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, and the spirit of Tilgath-Pilneser king of Assyria, and *he* carried them away (even the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh) and brought them unto Halah, and Habor, and Hara, and to the River Gozan unto this day.” (1 Chron. v. 26.) The use of the pronoun “ he,” and the fact that the verb is, in the Hebrew, singular, is in exact accord with the discovery that the two names are applicable to the same person. The substitution of “ even ” for “ and ” between the two names would place the matter on the right footing. Both names are used in 2 Kings xv, Pul being referred to in verse 19 in connection with the tribute of Menahem, and Tiglath-Pileser in verse 29, where reference is made to the partial captivity of Israel.

With the accession of Tiglath-Pileser to the throne the policy of Assyria underwent a change.

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“ The accession of Tiglath-Pileser II marks a turning-point in the history of western Asia. His first task was to regain the position held by his predecessors, but much impaired since in many ways, and especially by the Alarodians ; but he went far beyond that. While the Assyrian kings had hitherto virtually contented themselves with the subjection of Mesopotamia and the lands of Nairi, and only plundered or raised tribute on remoter territories, like Babylonia and Syria, the new ruler began systematically to build up a great political empire.” ¹

“ The conquered nations became subject provinces, governed, wherever possible, by Assyrian satraps, while turbulent populations were deported to some distant parts of the empire. . . . Centralisation superseded the loose union of mutually-hostile states and towns. . . . The Second Assyrian Empire was essentially a commercial one. It was founded and maintained for the purpose of attracting the trade and wealth of western Asia into Assyrian hands.” ²

It appears from some of the records that men from one district were mixed with women from

¹ Ed. Meyer, *Geschichte des Alterthums*, quoted in the *Story of the Nations*, “ Assyria,” page 219.

² Sayce : *Herodotus*, page 376.

Tiglath-Pileser

another, with a view to the destruction of all national feeling and the fusion of the various peoples into an Assyrian Empire. How this change of policy affected Israel all Bible students will recognise, and it is well to have this fact clearly before us prior to considering the incidents of the new reign and the reigns of those who came after Tiglath-Pileser. His inscriptions emphasise the altered policy, for instead of saying, "The land of So-and-so I plundered, I devastated it," he records, "To the boundaries of Assur I added So-and-so."

His first campaigns were directed against his nearer neighbours, south and north of Assyria. In the fifth year of his reign he turned his attention to Syria, the northern portion of which he annexed to his empire. At the same time he received tribute from others farther south. Amongst those who thus submitted to him he mentions "Minihimmi ir Samirina"—Menahem of Samaria, and Rezin of Syria. Menahem had obtained the throne of Israel by force in a time of civil strife. He evidently felt his position to be somewhat insecure, for

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it had only been established by ruthless cruelty. The Scriptural record is :

“ And Pul the king of Assyria came against the land : and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, that his hand might be with him, to confirm the kingdom in his hand. And Menahem exacted the money of Israel, even of all the mighty men of wealth, of each man fifty shekels of silver, to give to the king of Assyria : so the king of Assyria turned back, and stayed not there in the land.” (2 Kings xv. 19 and 20.)

Soon afterwards Pekah, the son of Remaliah, slew Pekahiah, the son of Menahem, who had succeeded to the kingdom, and took possession of the throne of Samaria. He made a league with Rezin, the king of Syria, with the object of warring against Judah, then reigned over by Ahaz. Instead of relying on Jehovah for assistance, Ahaz turned his eyes to Assyria, and sent to Tiglath-Pileser for help against his adversaries, sending at the same time the customary present of a vassal to his superior, a tribute referred to by Tiglath-Pileser on one of his inscriptions. By this action Ahaz showed an entire lack of faith in the God of Israel who had sent Isaiah with the message—

Tiglath-Pileser

“ Take heed, and be quiet ; fear not, neither be fainthearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and the son of Remaliah. . . . Thus saith the Lord God, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass . . . within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people.” (Isa. vii. 4–8.)

Tiglath-Pileser came to the help of Ahaz. In his annals the event of the year is indicated as “ To Philistia,” an expression which may be understood very much as we should say, “ To Palestine.” This expedition was the end of Syria, it was nearly the end of Israel—nearly, but not quite. Rezin and Pekah immediately gave up their attack upon Jerusalem, and the Assyrians attacked both Israel and the Philistines. In following the history of this period, there appears to be, at first sight, a difference between the Scriptural and the Assyrian accounts. They are, however, quite capable of being reconciled, in fact the two records are really supplementary to each other, and together enable us to construct a consistent whole. Tiglath-Pileser’s account is : “ Pakaha [Pekah] their king I killed, Ausi [Hoshea] I placed over them.” The Bible record is :

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“ In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abel-beth-maachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria. And Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and smote him, and slew him, and reigned in his stead, in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah.” (2 Kings xv. 29 and 30.)

There can be little doubt as to what happened. The conspiracy was organised in Israel, and was the outcome of the troubled state of the country and the lack of success in the war against Assyria. Whether Tiglath-Pileser was cognisant of it cannot be said, but with the usual boastfulness of an Assyrian king, he claimed the act as his, and looked upon Hoshea as his own appointed vassal. The poverty to which Israel was reduced may be seen in the fact that Hoshea's tribute to Tiglath-Pileser in recognition of his right to reign over Israel was only ten talents of gold and an unknown number of talents of silver (the inscription is defective).

We have said that this expedition was the end of Syria. The Syrian army was completely

Tiglath-Pileser

routed. Rezin took refuge in his capital, Damascus, which was besieged and its magnificent plantations destroyed. So the Assyrian record tells us: the Bible account is that "the king of Assyria went up against Damascus and took it, and carried the people of it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin." (2 Kings xvi. 9.) Rezin's kingdom was abolished, and a governor from Nineveh was installed to represent the Assyrian overlord.

The effects of the contact of the Assyrians under Tiglath-Pileser and the land of Palestine were not confined to the kingdom of Israel. Ahaz of Judah and the kings of Ammon, Moab, Edom, and the Philistines submitted to the Assyrians, so that from the Euphrates to the border of Egypt all kings were but vassals of Assyria.

"The Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel; for he made Judah naked, and transgressed against the Lord. And Tilgath-Pilneser king of Assyria came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him not. For Ahaz took away a portion of the house of the Lord, and out of the house of the king, and of the princes, and gave it unto the king of Assyria:

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but he helped him not." (2 Chron. xxviii. 19-21.)

There was one result from this contact of Assyria and Israel that was very far-reaching in its consequences. When Ahaz visited the Assyrian king in connection with his appeal for help against Israel and Syria, he saw at Damascus an altar on which Tiglath-Pileser offered sacrifice. Desiring to copy his suzerain, he sent particulars of this altar to Jerusalem and gave instructions for a similar one to be made for his own use, and placed in the house of Yahweh. On it he himself offered, contrary to the Mosaic Law, but in accord with Assyrian practice. The result was disastrous to him and to Judah. Already the draining of the wealth of Judah to pay tribute had weakened the country, and it became the prey of Philistine invaders, who took Bethshemesh, Ajalon, Gedereth, Shoco, Timnah, Gimzo, and dwelt there.

The reign of Tiglath-Pileser was thus a turning-point in the history of Assyria and Israel. The new policy to which reference has been made served to strengthen the Empire in

Tiglath-Pileser

its hold upon the lands it subdued. The transference of peoples from one land to another caused the deportees to be looked upon as strangers by the natives of the places where they were placed, whilst they in turn had no sympathy with the peoples among whom they dwelt. Indeed, the Assyrians would often appear to them in the light of protectors against the animosity of their neighbours. By this means the feelings of resentment against the conquerors natural to a conquered race would be modified, whilst all likelihood of the two races dwelling together making common cause against Assyria was completely obviated.

CHAPTER XVII

SHALMANESER IV

SHALMANESER IV, the successor of Tiglath-Pileser, is a king of whom very little is known. No monuments of his have been found, and we might have passed him by almost unnoticed were it not for the fact that he is the Shalmaneser referred to by name in the Scriptures. The incidents mentioned concerning him have a very close connection with one of the most important kings in Assyrian history, and with a very remarkable illustration that Assyriology affords of the accuracy of the Bible records. It is therefore desirable to refer to the record of his actions as contained in the Bible.

Shalmaneser succeeded to a well-organised kingdom, and might have looked forward to a long and prosperous reign. As a matter of fact, he only reigned over Assyria for five years,

Shalmaneser IV

and it was at a time when, after a long period of depression, Egypt had once more appeared upon the arena of the world's affairs. Shabaka, of the Ethiopian dynasty of Egyptian kings, the So of the Scriptures, had succeeded in asserting his authority over the whole of the Delta. There was therefore a renewal of the situation, in which Israel was placed between two rival powers whose world-policies were antagonistic. Having suffered so much from Assyrian domination under Tiglath-Pileser, it was natural that Israel should earnestly look to an apparently rising southern power, whose aid might be useful against the threatening from the north. It has been pointed out that Hoshea evidently attained to the crown of Israel with the assistance of the king of Assyria.¹ He thereby became an Assyrian vassal and was compelled to pay tribute year by year to his suzerain. By this means the nation became more and more impoverished, until at last it was decided to refuse payment and seek the help of Egypt. The prophets in vain pointed out the folly of such a course. Israel, "like a

¹ See pages 109 and 110.

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silly dove," called to Egypt. Hoshea entered into a conspiracy and sent messages to So (Shabaka), seeking for his assistance against Assyria. Such an action could not be tolerated by Shalmaneser. Hence he invaded Israel, shut up Hoshea, and, moving against Samaria, subjected it to a siege. In such an unequal contest it would have seemed that events would move quickly, and that the Assyrians would easily achieve their desires in regard to the city. It was otherwise, and Israel seemed to be moved by the energy of despair. The siege dragged on for three years. Ultimately it was successful, and the record states that "they [the Assyrians] took it," and the king of Assyria carried Israel away (2 Kings xviii). It is very interesting to note that the phrase "king of Assyria" is here used. Had the name of Shalmaneser occurred, there would have been a discrepancy between the Bible and the Assyrian records. Exactly what had happened is not clear. Shalmaneser died, and it is surmised that, the Assyrians growing dissatisfied with the slow progress of the siege, a military revolution took place which resulted in the throne of Assyria

Shalmaneser IV

being occupied by Sargon, one of the greatest of all the kings who ever sat there. It was this king who carried Israel away and placed them in Assyria and Media, as recorded in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XVIII

SARGON

SARGON II was the founder of the last and most powerful dynasty of Assyria. He was a usurper, as mentioned before, and was contemporary with Hoshea, the last king of Israel, Hezekiah of Judah, and Merodach-Baladan of Babylon.

Sargon is a remarkable illustration of the uncertainty of human fame. In all the literature of the world dealing with his period there was only one reference to him, and that but a passing allusion in the prophecies of Isaiah, where in quite a parenthetical way it is written : " In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod, (when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him)." (Isa. xx. 1.) The reference long perplexed Bible students, and guesses were made to account for the appearance of his name. Now all is explained, and in the facts as actually

Sargon

disclosed the Bible has received one more striking confirmation of its accuracy and trustworthiness. Summing up the wonderful record of his reign, his successful wars and great buildings, one writer finishes thus :

“ And this is the king who, by some inconceivable freak of chance, had dropped out of history as completely as though he had never existed, whose name was known from a single mention of it in Isaiah’s allusion to the war against Ashdod ; whose halls, laid open by Botta, were the first Assyrian halls ever entered by a modern’s foot ; and whose restoration to his proper place in the annals of mankind we owe entirely to the labours of Assyriology.”¹

From what has been said under Shalmaneser IV, it will be gathered that Sargon came to the throne of Assyria whilst the armies were engaged in the siege of Samaria. According to his own record of the transaction, he, in the beginning of his reign, took Samaria and deported 27,280 of its inhabitants. “ I took them to Assyria and put into their places people whom my hand had conquered.” In the Scriptures we read that he “ carried Israel

¹ Ragozin, *Story of the Nations*, “ Assyria,” page 294.

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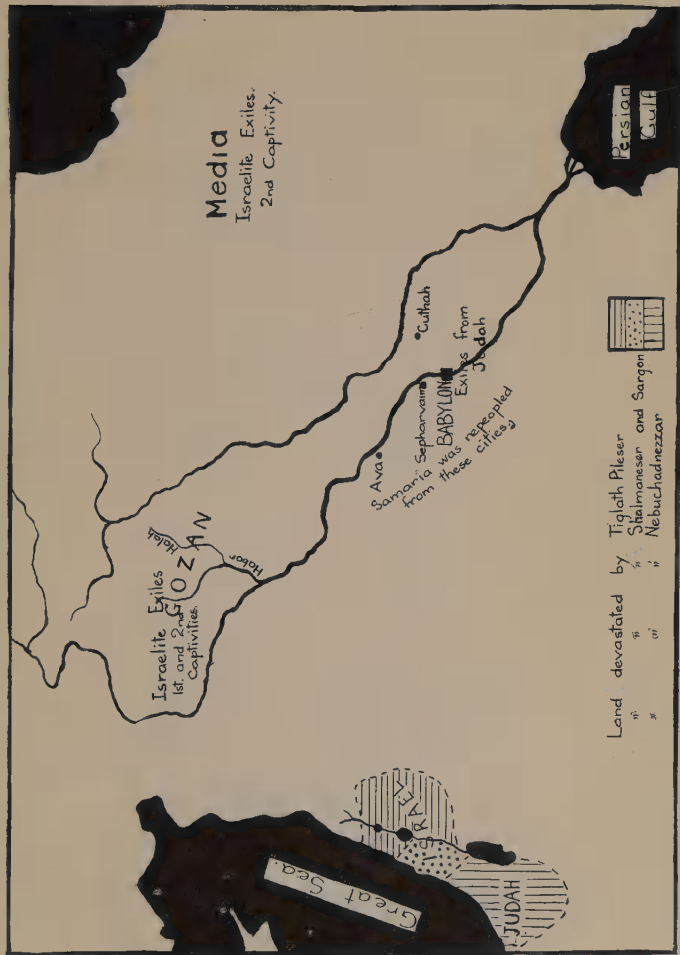
away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah, and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes." At the same time, that is in the first year of his reign, he also vanquished Merodach-Baladan of Babylon, and sent the people thereof to "Khatti" (Syria), which would no doubt include Samaria. It will be noticed that this was in pursuance of the policy inaugurated by Tiglath-Pileser,¹ and is a fitting comment on the record in Kings that—

"In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. . . . And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof." (2 Kings xvii. 6 and 24.)²

In the reign of Sargon the powers of Assyria and Egypt stood face to face. The peoples of Israel situate between the two must have wondered what the outcome of the situation would

¹ See pages 105-107.

² See map, opposite.



MAP ILLUSTRATING THE CAPTIVITIES OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH
AND THE REPEOPLING OF SAMARIA

Sargon

be. Once again Damascus, Arpad, and Hamath rose against the domination of Assyria. Short work was made of the rebellion, and the Assyrian army marched to Egypt. The struggle was short, Egypt suffered a complete defeat in a battle at Raphia, and Sargon records that all Syria, to the river of Egypt, was reduced to obedience. The conquered peoples could not rest content, and rebellion once again broke out. Ashdod appears to have taken the lead this time. It is the expedition which took place to subdue this revolt which forms the subject of the one reference to him in the Scriptures. He was met by a confederation of various peoples in the district of Palestine, headed up by Ashdod. Apparently the approach of Sargon's armies, led by his Tartan, not the king himself, was sufficient; the king of Ashdod fled, leaving all his possessions behind him.

There is a cylinder of Sargon's in the British Museum recording this campaign. Its contents may be summed up briefly as follows: Azuri, king of Ashdod, having refused to pay tribute to the Assyrians, was deposed by Sargon, and was succeeded on the throne by his brother

Babylon, Assyria and Israel

Ahimiti. The people of Ashdod killed Ahimiti and elected one Yamani as their king. They made a league with Philistia, Edom, Moab, and Egypt, but were defeated by Sargon, and Ashdod became tributary to Assyria again. Judah was concerned to some extent, but the warnings of the prophet Isaiah appear to have restrained the Jews from taking active part in the movement. By typical action of his he impressed his hearers with the lesson—

“ So shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians and the Ethiopians captives, young and old, naked and barefoot, even with their buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt . . . and the inhabitant of this country shall say in that day, Behold, such is our expectation, whither we flee for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria : and how shall we escape ? ”
(Isa. xx. 4-6.)

After this Sargon turned his attention to Merodach-Baladan, who was compelled to flee from Babylon, the country being entirely conquered by the Assyrians. The result of this conquest was that Assyria and Babylon were ruled over by one king. It is very significant

Sargon

in the history of Assyria, to see how the kings seemed drawn by some influence to seek opportunity to go to Babylon and there "take the hand of Bel." Sargon did this, taking part in the ceremonies which were supposed to consecrate him as a properly-recognised successor to the fabulous heroes of the old Babylonian Empire. There is much involved in this. In relating the incident, Maspero says: "Babylon possessed for the kings of Nineveh the same kind of attraction as at a later date drew the German Cæsars to Rome."¹ It was the result of the early facts in relation to Babylon referred to in the earlier portion of this work.² Babylon was the seat of the first uprising of the kingdoms of men, and of the apostasy from the primitive and pure religion of the days immediately following the Flood. Its corruptions of Truth became the recognised beliefs, and in varying forms were taken over by the other early peoples of the earth, as so well shown in Hislop's *Two Babylons*. Maspero's comparison of the past with the practice of the rulers of the Germano-

¹ Maspero, *The Passing of the Empires*, page 257.

² See pages 38 and 39.

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Holy Roman Empire is only another indication of the accuracy of the applications made by Hislop in regard to the religions of Babylon and Rome.

In addition to his warlike proclivities, Sargon was a builder. Amongst other erections he built a royal residence, which was discovered by Botta in 1842. Twenty-four pairs of colossal bulls on the outside, and two miles of sculptured slabs along the inside, walls gave ornamentation to the palace ! Until specimens of the bulls and slabs have been seen, it is difficult for the imagination to conceive what is meant by such particulars. Fortunately such specimens are on view in the British Museum and elsewhere, and a sight of them cannot fail to impress the beholder with a sense of the greatness of Sargon, and the abilities of the architects who designed such palaces.

Finally Sargon was slain by an unknown assassin and was succeeded by his son, Sennacherib.

CHAPTER XIX

SENNACHERIB

No Assyrian king is so well known as Sennacherib. This is due principally to his connection with the history of Judah ; but at the same time very much concerning him has been discovered from the annals and inscriptions of his time, and it is possible to construct the history of his reign in considerable detail. He was a contemporary of Hezekiah of Judah and Merodach-Baladan of Babylon, who are associated in the history as recorded in 2 Kings. Both were enemies of Sennacherib.

On the death of his father, Sennacherib ascended the throne, which he occupied for about twenty-four years, and, like his father, he was both a warrior and a builder. The death of Sargon was the signal for revolts against the Assyrian overlord in various places. Babylon was treated by Sennacherib as a vassal

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state. Merodach-Baladan again appeared on the scene and raised rebellion against Assyria, but was completely defeated, to reappear once again before he finally passed from the history of the times. The bitter conflict between Assyria and Babylon, which continued during the reigns of Sargon and Sennacherib, will explain the embassy which Merodach-Baladan sent to Hezekiah of Judah, doubtless for the purpose of soliciting support in his struggles against Assyria. Having disposed of Babylon, Sennacherib turned his attention to Elam and consolidated his power against the peoples of that district. He was then able to turn to the west and Egypt. There the Egyptian king and the Phœnicians had drawn together in a common animosity to the overbearing claims of Assyria and her king.

Before pursuing the history of Assyria under Sennacherib as it affected the peoples of Palestine, it is interesting to note the changes which were taking place elsewhere. The times of Sennacherib are interesting as marking the uprise of a new power in the world's affairs, a power which in after-years was to exercise pre-

Sennacherib

dominance in the politics of the East and West, and be particularly associated with Babylon. The Greeks moving over the waters of the Ægean Sea began to influence the surrounding nations. Farther west the Etruscans of Italy were also moving about the waters of the Mediterranean, and the movements of these two navies restricted the area open to the mariners of Tyre and Sidon. One result was the development of the North African colonies of Phœnicia and the working and exploiting of the tin-mines of Cornwall.

In turning his attentions to the peoples of the West, with their Egyptian sympathisers, Sennacherib, moving down from the north, first of all invaded Syria. Far away to the south was Egypt, and it was evident that sooner or later Egypt and Assyria must try conclusions for supremacy. Many of the Syrian states looked to Egypt for help against the threat of being overwhelmed by the great northern Power. We have already seen how Israel did this, and in the times of Sennacherib, Judah did the same. The prophets constantly warned their contemporaries of the danger of so doing,

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but usually in vain. Isaiah, for example, expostulated with them.

“Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of Me, that cover with a covering, but not of My spirit, that they may add sin to sin : that walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at My mouth ; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt ! Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion.” (Isa. xxx. 1-3.)

“Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help ; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many ; and in horsemen because they are very strong ; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord ! . . . The Egyptians are men, and not God ; and their horses flesh, and not spirit. When the Lord shall stretch out His hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they all shall fail together. . . . As birds flying, so will the Lord of Hosts defend Jerusalem ; defending also He will deliver it ; and passing over He will preserve it.” (Isa. xxxi.)

In the campaign that ensued, Sennacherib first dealt with Sidon and other Phœnician



SENNACHERIB RECEIVING TRIBUTE FROM LACHISH

The inscription reads : " Sennacherib, king of hosts, king of Assyria, sat upon his throne of state, and the spoil of the city of Lachish passed before him."

Sennacherib

cities, none of which could withstand him. There he received the homage of the various petty kings of the neighbourhood. Meanwhile Hezekiah was not idle, but made preparations for the coming struggle by repairing the walls of Jerusalem, stopping the springs, and making a reservoir for water which should be available in the case of siege. From Sidon, Sennacherib marched southward, and, sending a portion of his army against Jerusalem, he proceeded to Lachish, a town which was on the way to Egypt and which might have been seized by Tirhakah of Egypt, to the danger of the Assyrians. After a siege the town was surrendered to Sennacherib, and one of the most interesting of the bas-reliefs in the British Museum represents Sennacherib before the city receiving the spoils thereof. The slabs were taken from his palace at Koujunjik, and contain the inscription in cuneiform text, "Sennacherib king of hosts, king of Assyria, sat upon his throne of State, and the spoil of the city of Lachish passed before him."

Meanwhile the cities of Judah fared badly. Sennacherib went "against all the fenced cities

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of Judah and took them." (2 Kings xviii. 13.) His own account is more explicit. He states that he captured forty-six strong cities and fortresses and innumerable small cities which were round about them, many prisoners and much spoil. Hezekiah, not yet apparently having learned to place full confidence in Yahweh, submitted—

"Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria, to Lachish, saying, I have offended; return from me; that which thou puttest on me will I bear. And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver, and thirty talents of gold." (2 Kings xviii. 14.)

The payment of this fine must have caused great difficulties in Judah, for Hezekiah had to take the gold from the temple doors and from the treasures of his own house in order to pay it.

With the fall of Lachish, Sennacherib turned his attention to the Egyptian army which was approaching. Egypt was at this time ruled by Tirhakah, a king of the Ethiopian dynasty. Fearing, apparently, that Hezekiah might take

Sennacherib

advantage of the conflict to renounce his allegiance to Assyria, Sennacherib sent his chief officers to Jerusalem. They spoke of the futility of trusting on Egypt, boasted of the prowess of Assyria, compared Yahweh with the gods of the nations who had been subdued by Sennacherib and his predecessors. It was a "day of rebuke and blasphemy," as Hezekiah termed it. By this time, however, Hezekiah had learned that human help was vain, and that he must trust wholly on the Lord God of Israel for deliverance. To Him he prayed, and in response Isaiah was sent with the message—

"Thus saith the Lord. Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land ; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land." (2 Kings xix. 6 and 7.)

When the officers of the king of Assyria returned to their master, they found he had left Lachish and was warring against Libnah. Hearing of the approach of the Egyptian army, he sent one more message to Hezekiah threatening

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Jerusalem after he had dealt with the Egyptians. This message Hezekiah laid before the Lord in the temple, and again received his answer through Isaiah :

“ Thus saith the Lord . . . He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord. For I will defend this city to save it, for Mine own sake, and for My servant David's sake.” (2 Kings xix. 32-4.)

Sennacherib marched to meet the Egyptian army. They met at Eltekeh, north-west of Jerusalem, where the combined forces of Egypt and Ethiopia were completely routed and fled. Egypt could do no more, and nothing, it seemed, could save Judah from being overwhelmed by Assyria. But nothing of the kind happened, for—

“ The angel of the Lord went out and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand : and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.”

Sennacherib

A pestilence of some kind swept through the Assyrian host. All the boastings were vain, and the great warrior returned home.

Sceptics have made fun of the Bible record of this great catastrophe. But that it happened no candid student of history will deny. The Egyptian records also refer to the deliverance of that country from the power of Sennacherib. They speak of a different means—a legion of mice that devoured the weapons of the Assyrian host—but the result was the same.

“Whatever the agency employed in this remarkable destruction—whether it was caused by a simoon, or a pestilence, or by a direct visitation of the Almighty, as different writers have explained it, the event is certain. Its truth is written in the undeniable facts of later history, which show us a sudden cessation of Assyrian attack in this quarter, the kingdom of Judea saved from absorption, and the countries on the banks of the Nile left absolutely unobstructed by Assyria for the third part of a century.”¹

It is interesting to compare the foregoing brief account of the reign of Sennacherib as

¹ Rawlinson, *Story of the Nations*, “Egypt,” page 329.

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outlined in the Scriptures with his own records as inscribed on a six-sided cylinder which is to be found in the British Museum. It records the defeat of Merodach-Baladan, the subjection of various nations on the eastern frontier of Assyria, the invasion of Palestine and the siege of Jerusalem, the deposition of Merodach-Baladan, the conquest of tribes to the north-west of Assyria, a naval expedition to the Persian Gulf, the recovery of territory from Elam, the defeat and subjugation of the Elamites and Babylonians. It concludes with a description of the new palace he built at Nineveh. The following is his account of the siege of Jerusalem :

“ I drew nigh to Ekron and I slew the governors and princes who had transgressed, and I hung upon poles round about the city their dead bodies ; the people of the city who had done wickedly and had committed offences I counted as spoil, but those who had not done these things and who were not taken in iniquity I pardoned. I brought their king Padî forth from Jerusalem and I stablished him upon the throne of dominion over them, and I laid tribute upon him. I then besieged Hezekiah of Judah, who had not submitted to my yoke, and I

Sennacherib

captured forty-six of his strong cities and fortresses and innumerable small cities which were round about them, with the battering of rams and the assault of engines, and the attack of foot-soldiers, and by mines and breaches (made in the walls). I brought out therefrom two hundred thousand and one hundred and fifty people, both small and great, male and female, and horses, and mules, and asses, and camels, and oxen, and innumerable sheep I counted as spoil. (Hezekiah) himself, like a caged bird, I shut up within Jerusalem, his royal city. I threw up mounds against him, and I took vengeance upon any man who came forth from his city. His cities which I had captured I took from him and gave to Mitinti, king of Ashdod, and Padî, king of Ekron, and Silli-Bêl, king of Gaza, and I reduced his land. I added to their former yearly tribute, and increased the gifts which they paid unto me. The fear of the majesty of my sovereignty overwhelmed Hezekiah, and the Urbi and his trusty warriors, whom he had brought into his royal city of Jerusalem to protect it, deserted. And he dispatched after me his messenger to my royal city Nineveh to pay tribute and to make submission with thirty talents of gold, eight hundred talents of silver, precious stones, eye-paint . . . ivory couches and thrones, hides and tusks, precious woods, and divers objects, a heavy treasure, together with his

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daughters, and the women of his palace, and male and female musicians." ¹

The general agreement, yet with remarkable differences in detail, of the two accounts will be noticed. Sometimes silence is more impressive than specific statements. Sennacherib speaks of shutting up Hezekiah in a cage and taking vengeance upon anyone who came forth from the city. But he makes no reference whatever to the capture of the city. He mentions the tribute which the Bible record alludes to (with certain variations), but he makes the tribute payment the final phase. In truth it was far otherwise, and no one who reads the boasting record carefully can fail to be impressed by the weakness of its ending. Assyrian conquerors were not in the habit of admitting disasters, but it needs no great insight to see in the cylinder inscription an attempt to hide one, and to make the best possible case for his own glory. Particularly it will be observed that the king makes no mention of capturing the city, a thing which

¹ British Museum: Guide to the Babylonian and Assyrian Antiquities, pages 219 and 220.

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he would certainly not omit to chronicle had it taken place.

Of the rest of his reign there is nothing of importance to record beyond what has been referred to in the digest of his annals. Like his father, Sennacherib was a builder. He restored the whole city of Nineveh, avenues, streets, canals, quays, gardens, and aqueducts. He built a magnificent palace for himself, providing a substructure of masonry 454 cubits long by 289 cubits wide, made of blocks of stone joined together by bitumen. Enormous numbers of men must have been employed in such constructions. The woodwork of the palace was made of cedar and cypress overlaid with gold and silver ; sculptures in marble and alabaster adorned it. Many of these sculptures have been found and brought to Europe, and the scenes they display help us to understand the methods employed by Assyrian kings in their architectural undertakings.

“ Clearly none but conquering monarchs, who yearly took thousands of prisoners in battles and drove home into captivity a part of the population of every country they subdued,

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could have employed such hosts of workmen on their buildings.”¹

Sennacherib's last years were embittered by the intense rivalry which existed between his sons, and which led to his murder by two of them, as recorded in 2 Kings xix. It was an ignominious end for one who had accomplished so much.

It should be noted, in reviewing the reign of Sennacherib, that, notwithstanding the glamour of his reign, the seeds of decay were being sown. He reverted to the policy of the earlier kings of Assyria, and acted as a mere conqueror, and not as a consolidator of Empire. The results were not seen at once, but they inevitably followed in later reigns.

¹ Ragozin, *Story of the Nations*, "Chaldea," page 49.

CHAPTER XX

ESARHADDON

ESARHADDON, who succeeded Sennacherib, was contemporary with Manasseh of Judah and the Ethiopians in Egypt. His first work was to subdue the insurrection of his brothers, who had slain his father. That accomplished, he had, like his father before him, to deal with an uprising of Chaldea against the overlordship of Assyria. The son of Merodach Baladan refused to do homage to the new king, who sent his armies into Babylonia, defeated the rebels, and re-established the supremacy of Assyria.

Towards the city of Babylon, however, he adopted a different policy from that of his predecessors. He set to work to rebuild it and its temples, and even went so far as to worship the Babylonian gods, Nebo and Marduk. A record of his restoration of the walls and temples of Babylon exists on a memorial stone now in the British Museum.

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Of his various campaigns in different directions it is unnecessary to speak, for they had no connection with Israel until the Assyrians once again turned their attention to Syria, twenty years after the disaster that had overwhelmed the host of Sennacherib. Then Sidon was besieged and its king executed. After this Esarhaddon summoned the "kings of the Khatti and of the nations beyond the sea" to attend him at Nineveh. Twenty-two obeyed the call, some even coming from the isle of Cyprus. In the list of those who attended is included Manasseh, king of Judah, and also the kings of Edom, Moab, Gaza, Ascalon, and Ashdod. Later on the Syrian states once more turned their eyes to Egypt, where Tirhakah still reigned, for help against their suzerain. The Assyrian record fails us here, for the cylinders which contain the account are injured at this point. But we know that Manasseh joined in the conspiracy. He had forsaken the ways of his father, Hezekiah, and served Baal and all the host of heaven. He even caused his son to pass through the fire and set up a graven image in the house of Yahweh.

Esarhaddon

“ Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh in chains, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. And when he was in distress, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. And he prayed unto Him ; and He was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom.” (2 Chron. xxxiii. 11-13.)

Instead of “ in chains,” the margin of the Revised Version gives “ with hooks.” The word suggests piercing, hence the Authorised Version rendering “ among the thorns.” Probably it was by means of hooks through the nose or elsewhere that he was led to Babylon.

There are two points here which call for attention. First of all it will be noticed that Manasseh was taken to Babylon. This is a point in which the accuracy of the Bible is significant. It is probable that no other Assyrian king would have done this, but, as has been shown, Esarhaddon rebuilt the city of Babylon and he appears to have looked upon the country not merely as a foreign appendage, but as part of his own land, and often dwelt there. The

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second point is that the clemency which he manifested in restoring Manesseh to his kingdom is characteristic of him, although it was very unlike the usual kings of Assyria. He has been called by far the noblest and most gracious of all the Assyrian kings.

After the punishment of Judah and the other revolted states, Esarhaddon sent his armies against Tirhakah of Egypt, invading the land as far south as Memphis. Tirhakeh fled before him, and finally disappeared into Ethiopia. Egypt was divided up amongst twenty petty rulers who were established by Esarhaddon, and thus was reduced to the position foretold by the prophet :

“The burden of Egypt. Behold the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt ; and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at His presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it. And I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians : and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbour ; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom.”
(Isa. xix. 1-2.)

Esarhaddon was proud of his conquests, and

Esarhaddon

spoke of himself as king of Egypt, king of the Kings of Egypt. The event was an important one, for although Egypt had been stirring up the Syrian nations against Assyria, she had never yet been compelled to pay the penalty of her interference in the affairs of Palestine. Notwithstanding his successes in war, the decadence of Assyria was increased during his reign. The constant drain on the population by continued warfare was having its inevitable effects upon the nation, and the apparent prosperity only served to hide the decay that was actually going on.

In the midst of a further expedition against Egypt, Esarhaddon's health failed, and after a reign of about thirteen years he abdicated in favour of his son Ashur-bani-pal. He himself retired to Babylon, where he soon appointed another son viceroy. He died about a year afterwards.

In common with the other members of his line, Esarhaddon was a great builder. According to his records, he erected no less than three palaces for himself. Unfortunately none of these buildings has been explored. The one

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which he built in Babylon has not yet been discovered. One at Kalah was not finished, being destroyed by fire. The third, at Nineveh, is in the Nebbi Yunus, which the Moslems believe to be the tomb of the prophet Jonah, and which they regard as a sacred spot.

CHAPTER XXI

ASHUR-BANI-PAL

ASHUR-BANI-PAL, the son and successor of Esarhaddon, was contemporary with Manasseh, Amon, and Josiah of Judah, and with the XXVIth Dynasty in Egypt. He is not mentioned by name in the Bible, although he is generally understood to be the "great and noble Asnapper" referred to in Ezra. He ascended the throne during the period of the troubles in Egypt which had marked the conclusion of the reign of Esarhaddon, and his first work was the suppression of the revolt and the restoration of Assyrian supremacy in Egypt.

The Assyrians invaded Egypt, and the whole of the country from the Mediterranean to the First Cataract was subdued. Later on, however, Egypt once more attempted to secure

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its independence, and a second invasion was necessary. The city of Thebes was given over to the Assyrian soldiery, its inhabitants carried captive, and all its temples and palaces destroyed and despoiled. Two of the great obelisks which stood in front of one of the temples were taken to Nineveh; they are said to have weighed 2,500 talents, i.e., about seventy tons. It was to this that Nahum referred when speaking of the forthcoming destruction of Nineveh:

“Art thou better than populous No [No Ammon or Thebes] that was situate among the rivers, that had the waters round about it, whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was from the sea. Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite: Put and Lubim were thy helpers. Yet was she carried away, she went into captivity: her young children also were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets: and they cast lots for her honourable men, and all her great men were bound in chains.” (Nah. iii. 8-10.)

Although Ashur-bani-pal was personally very luxurious and less energetic than his prede-

Ashur-bani-pal

cessors, he was ambitious, and showed great cruelty in his campaigns. With the assistance of able generals, he succeeded in extending his northern boundaries farther than they had hitherto reached, and by his conquest of Elam that country was added to his territories on the south-east. Shusan (Susa), its capital, which had never before been sacked, was razed to the ground. Later Tyre surrendered and the Lydians became tributary. In fact, it may be said that under this king Assyria rose to the zenith of its power, but from this time it rapidly declined, indeed, it would not be too much to say that it collapsed.

In the latter part of this reign the Medes defeated the Assyrians, and for the first time in a hundred years Assyria was invaded by enemies. For a time the fortunes of Ashur-bani-pal were saved by a great invasion of the Scythians, who defeated the Median armies. They proved, however, to be most unreliable helpers, for they subsequently overran Assyria itself, leaving the land desolate, although Nineveh itself escaped their devastations.

Ashur-bani-pal was a munificent patron of

Babylon, Assyria and Israel

literature, and under his direction vocabularies and copies of rare and important works from other parts of Babylon and Assyria were prepared for the assistance of his scribes in the study of the ancient Sumerian language. He established a famous library at Nineveh, where most of the literary tablets now in the British Museum were discovered. The architecture of this period is reputed to have been of great skill and refinement, the reign of Ashur-bani-pal belonging to the best period of Assyrian art, as may be seen from many of the sculptures which are now in the British Museum. He rebuilt the temple of Merodach in Babylon. Remains of palaces have been found at Koujunjik and Nebi Yunis. On some of the sculptures from these palaces the truth of the Scriptures is demonstrated inasmuch as representations are found of instruments such as the harp and sackbut, which critics, in order to discredit the Book of Daniel, have asserted were not known in Babylon until some hundreds of years afterwards.

It may be mentioned as characteristic of this monarch that, unlike his predecessors,

Ashur-bani-pal

who delighted in the chase, Ashur-bani-pal had tame lions kept for his sport. He died in 626 B.C. and was succeeded by his son, Ashur-etil-ilani.

CHAPTER XXII

THE END OF ASSYRIA

UNDER the rule of Ashur-bani-pal Assyria seemed to reach the zenith of its power, and its continuance must have seemed assured. Actually she had overtaxed her strength, and, as was pointed out in previous chapters, the constant warfare had drained her resources. With the death of one of her most splendid monarchs, Assyria ceased to be a world-power and soon passed away altogether.

Ashur-etil-ilani assumed the crown of Assyria and Babylon, but important cities such as Ashur and Calah had been destroyed by the Medes or the Scythians. His reign was brief and inglorious, and he was succeeded by his brother, Sin-shar-ishkin.

Insurrection against Assyria was rife, and, Babylon having joined hands with Media, Nineveh was besieged and its last king burnt

The End of Assyria

himself, his wives and children, rather than allow them to fall into the hands of his enemies. Many of the tablets now in the British Museum show the marks of the fire by which Nineveh was destroyed.

The prophets of Israel foretold this downfall in very definite terms. We may take Nahum for an illustration of them :

“ With an overrunning flood He will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue His enemies. What do ye imagine against the Lord ? He will make an utter end : affliction shall not rise up a second time. For while they be folden together as thorns and while they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry.” (Chap. i. 8-10.)

“ All they that look upon thee shall flee from thee and say, Nineveh is laid waste : who will bemoan her ? Whence shall I seek comforters for thee ? . . . Behold thy people in the midst of thee are women : the gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies : the fire shall devour thy bars.” (Chap. iii. 7 and 13.)

Destruction, complete and overwhelming, is the burden of Nahum's message, and the facts

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of history are in exact accord therewith. Some two hundred years later a Grecian army passed over the very site of the city, but Xenophon, who recorded their march, knew nothing of the place. He tells us that it had a high wall and called it Mespila, giving an account of it, in which he describes it as a city of the Medes captured by the Persians! It is a fitting comment on the prediction of the prophet. "An utter end" had been decreed and only two centuries later the memory of it was so vague that its site was unknown.

Ages passed by, and the vague traditions were all that remained to place side by side with the references of Scripture. But now all is changed, and the researches of modern times have enabled us to reconstruct the history of Assyria and its capital Nineveh. From the brief survey we have been able to make we can see the force of Ezekiel's references to Assyria in its glory and its downfall :

"Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches, and with a shadowing shroud, and of an high stature; and his top was among the thick boughs. The waters

The End of Assyria

nourished him, the deep made him to grow : her rivers ran round about her plantation ; and she sent out her channels unto all the trees of the field. Therefore his stature was exalted above all the trees of the field ; and his boughs were multiplied, and his branches became long by reason of many waters, when he shot them forth. All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt all great nations. Thus was he fair in his greatness, in the length of his branches : for his root was by many waters. The cedars in the garden of God could not hide him : the fir trees were not like his boughs, and the plane trees were not as his branches ; nor was any tree in the garden of God like unto him in his beauty. I made him fair by the multitude of his branches : so that all the trees of Eden, that were in the garden of God, envied him.

“ Therefore thus said the Lord God : Because thou art exalted in stature, and he hath set his top among the thick boughs, and his heart is lifted up in his height ; I will even deliver him into the hand of the mighty one of the nations ; he shall surely deal with him ; I have driven him out for his wickedness. And strangers, the terrible of the nations, have cut him off, and have left him : upon the mountains and in all the valleys his branches are fallen, and his

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boughs are broken by all the watercourses of the land ; and all the peoples of the earth are gone down from his shadow, and have left him. Upon his ruin all the fowls of the heaven shall dwell, and all the beasts of the field shall be upon his branches : to the end that none of all the trees by the waters exalt themselves in their stature, neither set their top among the thick boughs, nor that their mighty ones stand up in their height, even all that drink water : for they are all delivered unto death, to the nether parts of the earth, in the midst of the children of men, with them that go down to the pit. Thus saith the Lord God : In the day when he went down to Sheol I caused a mourning : I covered the deep for him, and I restrained the rivers thereof, and the great waters were stayed : and I caused Libanon to mourn for him, and all the trees of the field fainted for him. I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall, when I cast him down to Sheol with them that descend into the pit : and all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Libanon, all that drink water, were comforted in the nether parts of the earth. They also went down into Sheol with him unto them that be slain by the sword ; yea, they that were his arm, that dwelt under his shadow in the midst of the nations." (Ezek. xxxi. 3-17.)

CHAPTER XXIII

THE RISE OF BABYLON—NABOPOLASSAR

THE fall of Assyria opened the way for a new world-power to arise. Media and Babylon had been the instruments of destruction, and it was the latter which really succeeded to the headship so long held by Assyria. It was, in a sense, a resurrection, for there had been an earlier Babylonian Empire. The connection between Assyria and Babylon is well illustrated in the vision of Daniel, in which he saw a beast like a lion which had eagle's wings. These wings were plucked, and the beast was then able to stand upon its feet as a man, having a man's heart. The two phases are typical of the difference between the Assyrian and Babylonian peoples. The combination of eagle and lion suggests the ravening of the bird and beast of prey, and the cruelties of the Assyrians in their conquests, some of which have been referred to

Babylon, Assyria and Israel

in the course of our review, are quite in accord therewith. There was very little of the humane about them. When Babylon became the head of gold (Dan. ii. 38), a new spirit arose, and the predominant power was of a more humane character than its predecessor. It is to this power we now turn.

Nabopolassar, the first of the kings with whom we have to do, was contemporary with Josiah and the prophet Jeremiah, and Pharaoh Necho of Egypt. He was the father of the better-known Nebuchadnezzar, and claims our attention on account of his part in the overthrow of Assyria and the establishment of the New Babylonian Empire. Out of the old Assyrian Empire he claimed suzerainty over the regions along the Euphrates, Syria and Palestine. During his reign he became involved in a war with Egypt, and, being ill at the time, he sent his son Nebuchadnezzar against the Egyptian armies under Pharaoh Necho.

It was in connection with the events which led up to this conflict that Josiah of Judah met his death. The passing of Assyria evidently suggested to Necho of Egypt the possibility

Rise of Babylon—Nabopolassar

of re-establishing Egyptian supremacy in Syria. Josiah determined to resist the attack, and, notwithstanding the expostulations of the king of Egypt, placed his forces in opposition to the Egyptian army. The Egyptians evidently followed the coast route, and Josiah the inland route, to the north. The armies met at Megiddo, with disastrous results to Judah, for Josiah was slain and his army completely defeated. It was the beginning of the end to the Jewish state, for from this time Gentile interference in the succession of the kings became usual.

By his victory over Judah, Necho became suzerain of Syria, and the rise of the Babylonian Empire made a conflict between the two powers certain.

The conflict was postponed for a short time, but eventually it took place at Carchemish. It resulted in a complete victory for the Babylonians. Nebuchadnezzar received the submission of Judah and other Syrian states, but in the moment of victory he heard of the death of his father, and without waiting to follow up his victory, or to supervise the transportation of

Babylon, Assyria and Israel

the prisoners, he hastened back to Babylon to secure the throne before a pretender could have time to arise.

The prophet Jeremiah, in his forty-sixth chapter, has a very graphic prophecy in relation to the Battle of Carchemish, which may be read in this connection with much profit. He pictures the dismay of the Egyptians :

Who is this like the Nile that riseth up,
Like the rivers whose waters toss themselves ?
Egypt is like the Nile that riseth up, and his
waters toss themselves like the rivers :

And he saith, I will rise up, I will cover the
earth :

I will destroy the city and the inhabitants
thereof.

Go up, ye horses ; and rage ye chariots : and
let the mighty men go forth :

Cush and Put, that handle the shield : and
the Ludim, that bend the bow.

For that day is a day of the Lord, the Lord of
hosts, a day of vengeance, that He may
avenge Him of His adversaries :

And the sword shall devour and be satiate,
and shall drink its fill of their blood :

For the Lord, the Lord of Hosts, hath a
sacrifice in the north country by the river
Euphrates.

Rise of Babylon—Nabopolassar

Go up into Gilead, and take balm, O virgin
daughter of Egypt :

In vain dost thou use many medicines : there
is no healing for thee.

The nations have heard of thy shame, and the
earth is full of thy cry :

For the mighty man hath stumbled against
the mighty, and they are fallen both of
them together. (Verses 7-12.)

CHAPTER XXIV

NEBUCHADNEZZAR

NEBUCHADNEZZAR was by far the greatest of the kings of the new Empire. He was contemporary with Josiah, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah, kings of Judah, and with Necho, Hophra, and Amasis II, of Egypt. His reign was long, prosperous, and, notwithstanding a number of campaigns, it was generally of a peaceful character.

We have noted already his first appearance upon the arena of history. Having subdued Egypt and Syria, his succession to the throne of the Empire of Babylon made him the greatest potentate of his time. The situation which existed made it politic for him to seek expansion in the land of Syria and Palestine ; in any other direction he would probably have found himself in conflict with his late allies. The fact that Egypt still remained an important power made

Nebuchadnezzar

it the more necessary that he should be paramount in Syria.

Notwithstanding the withdrawal of Nebuchadnezzar from the country to secure his accession to the crown, the greater part of Syria and Palestine lost no time in transferring their allegiance to Babylon. The little state of Judah, under its king, Jehoiakim, who had been appointed by Necho of Egypt, paid tribute at first, but after three years, Jehoiakim renounced his allegiance and renewed the alliance with Egypt, ignoring the warnings of the prophet Jeremiah. The state of affairs in the land was evil, as marauding bands of Syrians and others caused much affliction to the people. The shortsighted policy of Jehoiakim led to the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, who came against the city, and bound the king in fetters to carry him to Babylon. Apparently Jehoiakim was not actually taken to Babylon, for he died at the time, and was immediately succeeded by his son Jehoiachin, who, after a three months' reign, surrendered himself and family to the king of Babylon in the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. Among the

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captives who were taken away at this time were Ezekiel and Mordecai. The golden vessels of Solomon were also removed with the royal treasures.

Mattaniah (Zedekiah), the brother of Jehoiakim, was placed on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar, who bound him with an oath not to enter into an alliance with Egypt. Zedekiah, who was a weak prince, easily influenced by his courtiers, soon broke his oath, and sent ambassadors to Egypt for help. False prophets predicted the failure of Babylon, but the prophet Ezekiel, who was already in captivity, sternly denounced the action of the king and foretold that he should be taken captive to Babylon, where he should die. He also predicted that the Egyptian help would prove futile in the war (Ezek. xvii). Pharaoh Necho had died, and his successor, who was young and ambitious, gladly availed himself of the opportunity to obtain allies of the various nations in Syria. With their aid Egypt made her last bid for supremacy, and Judah and the Phœnician cities of Tyre and Sidon combined in her support. Nebuchadnezzar advanced into northern Syria and took up a

Nebuchadnezzar

strategically-strong position at Riblah, on the Orontes, in the land of Hamath, whence he dispatched a part of his army to Jerusalem. Pharaoh Hophra (Apries, as he is known in Egyptian history) came to the assistance of Zedekiah, but was driven back into Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar, who finally captured Jerusalem in the eleventh year of Zedekiah's reign. The temple and the whole city, with its walls and towers, were razed to the ground, and the pillars and brazen ornaments of the temple were broken up. Zedekiah himself was taken captive, his sons were slain before his eyes, after which he was blinded and taken to Babylon.

The Babylonian army then occupied Phœnicia, though the city of Tyre offered an obstinate resistance, and only acknowledged its allegiance to Babylon after a long siege which is stated to have lasted for thirteen years, and even then the city only capitulated on the condition that its king should continue to reign under the suzerainty of Babylon. By these campaigns Nebuchadnezzar established the new Babylonian Empire on a firm basis, so that its authority

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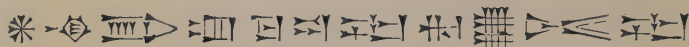
was unquestioned from the Persian Gulf to the Egyptian frontier.

Ezekiel had indicated that Nebuchadnezzar should conquer Egypt. The long siege of Tyre had not produced results to Babylon commensurate with the effort it entailed.

“Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon: and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey.” (Ezek. xxix. 19.)

In accordance with this prediction, Nebuchadnezzar invaded the Delta of the Nile. An inscription cylinder of his has been found in the Isthmus of Suez—a silent testimony to this invasion, in the course of which he would be able to pitch his royal pavilion before the entry of Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes (Jer. xliii. 9 and 10).

The Egyptian campaign was the last one of Nebuchadnezzar's of which any record exists. The impression made by a review of his military expeditions is that of a capable general who met with much success as “the sword of the Lord,” but who was very far removed from the fero-



* Na - bi - um - ku - du - ur - ri - u - su - ur

Nebuchadnezzar

BRICK OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR AND SPECIMEN CUNEIFORM
SPELLING OF HIS NAME

Nebuchadnezzar

cious conquerors who had in earlier times established and extended the Empire of Assyria.

Great as was the fame of Nebuchadnezzar as a soldier, it is as a builder that he is best attested in the remains of his times. "Is not this great Babylon that I have built?" may seem a vaunting boast, but it is based upon unquestionable truth. A reservoir, canals with quays and bridges, temples, city walls, a citadel to repel enemies, a great wall from the Tigris to the Euphrates—all attest his energy in carrying out his constructions. Bricks bearing his name are found over the whole country. Nine-tenths of the bricks brought from Mesopotamia are said to bear his name. The creator of the later Empire of Babylon, he was also the author of its architectural splendour.

The following quotation from the British Museum Guide, describing one of Nebuchadnezzar's cylinders of inscriptions, will form an interesting summary of his building operations :

"The restoration of the temple of Merodach at Babylon, and the rebuilding of the shrines

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of the gods connected therewith ; the repair or rebuilding of the great city walls of Babylon called *Imgur-Bel* and *Nimitti-Bel* ; the building of the temple of the goddess *Nin-Karrak* at *Sippar* ; the building of the temple of the sun-god at *Larsa* ; the building of the temple of the sun-god at *Sippar* ; the building on the *Lugal-Marada* temple ; the building of the temple of the goddess *Ninmakh* in Babylon ; and the clearing out of the eastern canal of Babylon and the strengthening of its banks. Apart from these works, *Nebuchadnezzar II* devoted great attention to the repair and completion of the very ancient shrine of the god *Nebo* at *Borsippa*, the modern *Birs Nimrud*, which has been identified with the tower of *Babel*. . . . This temple was rebuilt by *Nebuchadnezzar* in seven stages, each of which was faced with glazed tiles of a different colour, and it was called ' The temple of the seven divisions of the Heaven and the Earth.' ''¹

Nebuchadnezzar died in 561 B.C., after a reign of fifty-five years, and was succeeded in turn by *Evil-Merodach*, *Neriglissar* (or *Nergal-sharuzur*), and *Labashi-Marduk*, whose combined reigns only occupied about six years. The first of these released *Jehoichin* of *Judah*

¹ British Museum : Guide to Babylonian and Assyrian Antiquities, page 194.

Nebuchadnezzar

from captivity and exalted him to a position of honour in Babylon. The last of the three was murdered after occupying the throne for nine months, and was succeeded by Nabonidus.

CHAPTER XXV

NABONIDUS AND BELSHAZZAR

NABONIDUS, who was a contemporary of the prophet Daniel, was one of a number of princes who were concerned in the murder of the previous king, Labashi-Marduk, "an ill-natured boy," as he has been termed. He was married to Nitokris, the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar. He was by no means an aggressive monarch, and during his reign he seems to have sought by all possible means the good of his country. Unfortunately for him and his country he disregarded the usual forms of worship and devoted much attention to the objects of worship in past times, and to the older temples of the land. The consequence of this was twofold. In relation to himself it resulted in the alienation of the priesthood who were associated with the usual worship of Babylon,

Nabonidus and Belshazzar

and this had much to do with the overthrow of his kingdom. In a cylinder which contains the annals of his reign, the sullenly-spiteful persistence of the priesthood is evidenced by the repetition at each new year : “ Nebo came not to Babel, Bel came not forth . . . ”—i.e. the customary processions of these gods were omitted. In relation to us, a good deal of knowledge is available concerning ancient times as the direct result of the antiquarian leanings of Nabonidus.

One result of this desire of Nabonidus for the study of the past was that he left most of the affairs of the kingdom in the hands of his son, Bel-shar-uzzar, the Belshazzar of the Book of Daniel. References are made to him in the inscriptions of the king, one of which reads :

“ As for me, Nabonidus, the king of Babylon, protect thou me from sinning against thine exalted godhead, and grant thou me graciously a long life : and in the heart of Belshazzar, my first-born son, the offspring of my loins, set the fear of thine exalted godhead, so that he may commit no sin, and that he may be satisfied with the fullness of life.”

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Critics of the Book of Daniel have averred that there was no king of the name of Belshazzar. The foregoing reference to him disposes of the objection, for it is evident from the testimony we have that he was associated with the king in the affairs of the kingdom. This fact will explain why it was that when Daniel was called in to read the writing which appeared so mysteriously on the wall (Dan. v), all that Belshazzar could promise was that he should be made the third ruler in the kingdom. The contrast between this instance of royal favour and other similar cases recorded in the Scriptures cannot be overlooked. When Joseph was able to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh, he was made second in the kingdom, next to Pharaoh himself. So, too, in yet later days, Mordecai was given a similar position in the kingdom of Persia. Recognising that Belshazzar himself was in a subordinate position to his father, Nabonidus, it is seen that all he could promise to Daniel was that he should be next unto himself, and therefore the third ruler in the kingdom.

For the most part Belshazzar appears to have

Nabonidus and Belshazzar

resided in Babylon, whilst his father remained in the provinces. This is confirmed by a statement in the Babylonian Chronicle, that when Sippar was taken by Cyrus, Nabonidus fled. He was afterwards, apparently, captured in Babylon, or in the province of that name.

In the year 539 B.C. Cyrus entered Babylon, whilst he made his general, Darius the Mede, governor of the province. The conqueror conciliated the priesthood by returning to their shrines the gods which Nabonidus had brought to Babylon. In the meantime Belshazzar still held out in the inner portion of the city; probably in the temple quarters. It is known that, after the entrance of Cyrus into Babylon, contracts were still dated in the year of "Nabonidus, king of Babylon," and are described as being drawn up "in the city of the king's palace, Babylon." The end came as indicated in the Book of Daniel. Some historians say that it was about the season of the festival held in honour of the god Tammuz. If that were so, it would mean that the great feast referred to in the Bible record was a religious one, a fact

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which adds to the dramatic interest of the record that "in that night was Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom." The feast of Tammuz held a most important place in the Babylonian mythology, a fact which will explain why such a feast as that recorded should have taken place even in the last extremity of the defence of the doomed city.

With the death of Belshazzar there passed away the Babylonian Empire, the golden head of the kingdoms of men, and the silver breast, or Persian phase of the kingdoms of men took its place. Its power had been short-lived, but its place in the Scriptures makes the time of its glory a most important era in the world's history. It saw the end of the kingdom of God as it existed in the past.

The words of the prophet best mark the importance of the times :

"And thou, profane, wicked prince of Israel [Zedekiah] whose day is come when iniquity shall have an end. Thus saith the Lord God : Remove the diadem, take off the crown, this shall not be the same ; exalt him that is low,

Nabonidus and Belshazzar

and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him." (Ezek. xxi. 25-7.)

CHAPTER XXVI

CYRUS

ALTHOUGH Cyrus is usually termed "king of Persia," he appears to have come from Anshan, a neighbouring district, now known as Khushistan, bordering on the Persian Gulf. It is an upland region, thickly wooded in parts. Minerals, timber, and stone could be obtained in abundance in Elam, which made trading between it and Babylonia an important matter, and led to the rivalry which caused the fall of Babylon. Cyrus, who in the inscriptions is called Kurush, first conquered Lydia, the most extensive and powerful state in Asia Minor, defeating its king, Kroisos, better known as Cræsus. After an interval of which little is known, he turned his attention to Babylon and effected its downfall.

On a baked clay cylinder of Cyrus, now in the British Museum, there is an account of his

Cyrus

conquest of Babylonia, and of the chief events of his reign in that country. The following is a translation of a part of the inscription :

“ He [i.e. Marduk] sought out a righteous prince, a man after his own heart, whom he might take by the hand ; and he called his name Cyrus, king of Anshan, and he proclaimed his name for sovereignty over the whole world. The hordes of the land of Kutu he forced into submission at his feet, and the men whom (the god) had delivered into his hands he justly and righteously cared for. And Marduk, the great lord, the protector of his people, beheld his good deeds and his righteous heart with joy. He commanded him to go to Babylon, and he caused him to set out on the road to that city and like a friend and ally he marched by his side ; and his troops, with their weapons girt about them, marched with him, in countless numbers like the waters of a flood. Without battle and without fighting Marduk made him enter into his city of Babylon ; he spared Babylon tribulation, and Nabonidus, the king who feared him not, he delivered into his hand.”¹

It appears that the Persians drew off the waters of the rivers during the period when they were

¹ British Museum : Guide to Babylonian and Assyrian Antiquities, pages 196 and 197.

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low; they were thus able to cross on foot and force their way into the position held by the Babylonians. Hence the easiness of the conquest.

Some difficulty may be felt in relation to the references in the Bible to Darius the Median, prior to the recognition of Cyrus of Persia as the king of Babylon. The record is that "Darius the Median took the kingdom" (Dan. v. 31). The Revised Version alters this to "received the kingdom." In Dan. ix he is referred to as "Darius . . . which was made king." Evidently Cyrus "made" Darius king for a short time; for no reference occurs to anything beyond the first year of his reign.

It is interesting to note that the work of Cyrus in connection with Babylon was the subject of prophecy long before he was to accomplish his great mission:

"Thus saith Yahweh to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him: and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut. . . . Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth,

Cyrus

their idols were upon the beasts and upon the cattle : your carriages were heavy loaden ; they are a burden to the weary beast. They stoop, they bow down together ; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity. . . . Come down and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground ; there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans.”¹

In these same prophecies it was also written : “ For Jacob, My servant’s sake, and Israel Mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name.” The application of this was seen when, in the very first year of his reign, Cyrus issued a decree permitting the exiled Jews to return to the land of Israel, and charging them to rebuild the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem.

“ Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth ; and He hath charged me to build Him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people ? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (He is the God) which is in Jerusalem.” (Ezra i. 2 and 3.)

¹ Isaiah xlv, xlvi, xlvii.

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Many responded, but others remained. With the incidents of the restoration, and the work of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, we are not concerned here. The downfall of the Babylonian headship was an era in world-history for both Jews and Gentiles, and the era forms the natural ending of this work so far as any historical details are concerned.

After the reign of Cyrus, Babylon continued to be an important city, it remained one of the capitals of the Empire of Persia, and it must often have seemed that the predictions of the Jewish prophets were doomed to failure. But the Word of God cannot fail, and gradually the city became more and more deserted and neglected. Alexander the Great purposed to make it the centre of his vast dominion, but his early death prevented the realisation of his intentions. And so eventually it passed from the scene. It was "as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited . . . wild beasts of the desert shall lie there" (Isa. xiii. 19-21). "Thou shalt be desolate for ever . . . Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling-place for dragons, an astonish-

Cyrus

ment, and a hissing, without an inhabitant ” (Jer. li. 26 and 37). In this condition Babylon remained, and still remains, a constant witness to the certainty of the fulfilment of Jehovah’s Word.

KEY TO THE BABYLONIAN AND ASSYRIAN EXHIBITS IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM

SUBJECT	PAGE	ASSYRIAN TRANSCRYPT	NIMROUD GALLERY	NIMROUD CENTRAL SALOON	ASSYRIAN SALOON	NINEVEH GALLERY	NORTH GALLERY ASSYRIAN Room No. 3	NORTH GALLERY ASSYRIAN Room No. 4
Cuneiform Writing	15	—	—	—	—	—	Inscriptions Squeeges Decipherment Tablets Cylinders, etc.	—
Tel-el Amarna Evidences of Civilisation	85 26	— —	— —	— —	— —	— —	—	— Syllabaries, etc., from Royal Library Astronomical Records Incantations, prayers and hymns
Religion ..	38	Altars of Ashur-Nasir-pal	Slabs with figures of Ashur and other gods also offerings	Statues of Nebo	Slabs of religious ceremony, etc. Mythological scenes and figures	—	Tablets, Model of liver (Ez. 21, 21)	Creation and Deluge Tablets
Traditions ..	54 60	—	Conflict between Marduk and Tiamat (creation myth)	—	—	—	—	—
Ur of the Chaldees	67	—	—	—	—	—	Bricks	—
Kudur Mabug	73	—	—	—	—	—	Bricks	—
Khammurabi	72	—	—	—	—	—	Bricks, Stele of Laws, Bricks, Tablets, etc.	—
Ashur-nasir-pal	89	Winged lions, slabs, altar and Obelisk	Statue, Sculptures from palace with representation of lions	Memorial stone, Bull and lions	—	—	Slabs, Bricks and Coffers	Historical slab (alabaster)

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